

To Sister M Alacogue,

In grateful appreciation  
from the graduates of '24.


Lillian Berschback

Evangeline Dollmer

Catherine Howell



HOW TO LISTEN TO GOOD MUSIC.



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HOW TO LISTEN TO GOOD MUSIC  
AND ENCOURAGE THE TASTE IN  
INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL MUSIC

WITH MANY USEFUL NOTES  
FOR LISTENER & EXECUTANT

BY  
K. BROADLEY GREENE



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To  
Artists of the Past and Present  
Who have made my Musical Life  
possible.



## FOREWORD.

 HERE are not a few music lovers amongst us, perhaps, who will welcome this little work, the aim of which is to make clear to its readers the characteristics of musical works and the differences which lie between them. To be informing also concerning the various stages through which all musical structures have passed before attaining those forms in which they are now presented to us. In certain chapters, notably "A Chapter which Helps other Chapters," pains have been taken to throw light on the fugue, counterpoint, and such-like musical devices, so many of which are a little obscure in their meaning to many frequenters of our concert rooms. Should these ends be achieved, this volume, conceived in the arduous days of war-time, and written in the happier ones of peace, will not have been penned in vain.

K. BROADLEY GREENE.



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# THE SYMPHONY.





# THE APPRECIATION OF GOOD MUSIC.

## THE SYMPHONY.



SYMPHONY is a musical work for instruments only. It provides no movements for solo instruments, though a theme at points may introduce a phrase for a single performer. A rather favourite device of some composers is to arrange for a subject to be started by several instruments of one kind, such as violins, violas, violoncello, amongst the strings; clarinets and other reed instruments amongst the wood. Groups of different ones, too, whose sonority is sympathetic one to another have whole passages written for them, during which the other instruments are silent. An instance of this kind comes into Haydn's Thirteenth Symphony, the largo of which is opened by oboes and 'cellos. Apart from the extreme beauty of the theme, the tonality of this com-

bination can scarcely be heard without emotion even by the merely moderately musical.

The symphony had very modest beginnings, the very earliest being produced for a sort of bag-pipe, an organ and a flute. Scarlatti was perhaps the first to raise it to a more exalted position, he being foremost in giving instrumental music a separate place in tonal art. Prior to his age—the years that lie between 1730 and 1757—instruments were only brought into play as accompaniment to cantata and other choral music. The next step higher for the symphony was given it by Philip Emanuel Bach, a son of the great Sebastian, who inherited in no small degree his father's creative genius. From his pen came a number of symphonic works for an orchestra, provided by Frederick the Great, consisting of horns, flutes, hautboys, violins, violas, violoncellos, piano and double bass. Many of these might find a place even now in our concert programmes. To this composer Haydn always paid tribute as founder of the real symphonic form, a different opinion being held by the musical historian who sees in Haydn the father of the modern symphony with the four—sometimes five—varied movements that make its organic whole. Our concert programmes show these to be in the main :

An allegro.

A largo or andante.

A minuet or scherzo.

An allegro, sometimes in rondo form.

Haydn wrote many of his symphonies in the years of his really biting poverty. In this fact, what proof do we not see of the manner in which genius can overrule all obstacles? Save in his slow themes, Haydn's orchestration shows a thousand joyous fancies. His rondos dance with joy, ripples of happiness ringing from the bows of his strings. And all this conceived so far as his earlier work is concerned when he held a poorly paid post, and gave lessons at starvation fees. It is happier to think that his later symphonies were given to the world when a visit to England brought him comparative riches.

Next in chronological order as one of the immortal symphony writers was Mozart, and it is not surprising, perhaps, to find that his first charming melodic work in symphonic form was written at the youthful age of twenty-two, for at twelve he had already given to the world several inspired compositions little appreciated in publishers' circles, but admired by the great Haydn himself. His symphonies reached the astonishing number of forty-nine—of which nine, includ-

ing that known as the "Jupiter," will rank as masterpieces through every age. A notable feature in the construction of many of these is the trio, which can rightly be described as a sub-division of that movement which includes the minuet. Although this feature bears the name of trio for the reason that it is written in three time, in some instances only three instruments are brought into it for the purpose of contrast to a heavier scored minuet. A contrasting key, too, is generally made use of to heighten its effect; it has two repeats and then returns to the minuet.

Opinion is not wanting amongst certain musicians of our day that both the symphonies of Haydn and those of his immediate successor, Mozart, border on the thin and the tame. This is not surprising, for the reason that the taste which Wagner created for great volumes of sound has with many come to stay; but the musicians are still amongst us who can appreciate the vast store set by Haydn and Mozart on the tonal value of a few notes struck together—or even, in some instances, of one note vibrating on the air. Works written in this vein are difficult to conduct, and difficult of performance, for these tonal values require the notes to be approached and left in a way only possible to the most sensitive of artists.

There is, for all the opinions abroad at this musical epoch, incomparable enjoyment to be had in the concert room from a sympathetic rendering of either of these master's symphonies. In listening to Mozart, one's thoughts can only turn at points to the amazing powers which enabled him to leave over six hundred works, for he only lived thirty-five years. Amazing, too, is the joyousness of his strains, for he tasted the bitter dregs of poverty again and again.

Our next step in dealing with the symphony brings us to its arch-priest, Beethoven, who offered it some of the greatest treasures of his genius. Musical critics bid us see in his first two works of the kind the influence of Haydn and Mozart; this is not surprising, as he learnt composition from both, and from Haydn in particular. But to his Third Symphony—that known as the “Eroïca,” Beethoven brought enrichments that bore no trace of any predecessor’s genius. So wide is the composer’s appeal in this, that even the negligibly musical confess themselves as being spell-bound by its beauty. It is in turn gracious, profound, tragic, and of the mood that transports us to happier spheres. In this work the scherzo is very strongly developed, a feature that Beethoven introduced in place of the minuet. It seems

always a movement of revels; whimsical—sportive; conceived in moments when its creator watched fancied elves among the primroses in his beloved woods, or during those days of reaction that followed on the writing of more solemn themes.

Many of the ardent Beethoven admirers love to compare the beauties of one symphony with another. A freer spirit than this should be carried to the concert hall, for the whole gamut of feeling is touched in turn by these mighty works. We are the sport of more emotions than we fancy; Beethoven in his symphonies discovers them for us, with the result that the mood of to-day is searched by the fifth, while to-morrow it will be searched by the seventh. In each of them, from the first to the ninth, we find the same constructive skill that never leaves us grave too long, nor toyed with to triviality when the light-hearted scherzo dances off the strings. But for this restraint—the sign of the true artist—we should perhaps be maddened by those more sublime movements that almost tell the secrets of Eternity.

Yet another conviction that comes to us as we sit through a Beethoven symphony, is that of its creator never having to economise his inspirations. It is wealth, wealth, all the time. So rapidly did

themes grow one out of the other, when symphony writing, that Beethoven even kept four manuscripts on hand at a time, walking from one to another on its stand to add the phrases appropriate to each, as they fired his seething brain.

And the pathos of his deafness! It is an overwhelming thought for us that when the ninth, with its choral feature, was performed for the first time under his own baton, he heard no note of its beauty, no throb of that tumult of applause that arose at its finale!

Passing now to Schubert as a symphony writer, is to tell, first, that his talent for orchestral composition developed at the age of seventeen. Before his eighteenth birthday was reached, he had given the Symphony in D to the world, in addition to many of those exquisite songs that thrill the generations in turn. Like Mozart, he put into his life of little over thirty years an incredible number of works, most of which too, as in the case of his great predecessor, were written in days of pitiful poverty. So great was Schubert's power of concentration—so unlimited the power of his inward ear over external sounds—that whole subjects of his symphonies would be written while a street band played popular airs beneath his garret window. Whole movements,

too, were committed to odd sheets of paper roughly ruled by himself, his penurious state often forbidding the purchase of manuscript paper.

It reads strangely that his C major Symphony, which now draws large audiences, would not even have had a hearing in his lifetime but for the interest an influential friend had with a publisher. This work almost divides honours with the pathetic one in B flat known as the "Unfinished." In all, Schubert wrote ten symphonies, some of them with strong swinging features, which some biographers attribute to his sympathy with folk-song forms—their rhythmic strength and their melodic force. An admitted fault on his construction side is the tendency both in solo and symphonic writings to prolong passages of no particular beauty—to drag in a homely expression, passages that are mere trimmings to the central theme. Many of the finales suffer from this want of restraint.

#### SCHUMANN AS SYMPHONY WRITER.

Turning to Schumann as a writer of symphony, we are asked by biographers to consider a composer who brought his creative genius to the service of symphonic form at the somewhat late age



of forty-one, an age which neither Mozart nor Schubert reached by several years. It might be inferred from this that Schumann was lacking in those finer inspirations that alone justify the exalted setting of the symphony. Schumann's handicap, however, was his limited knowledge of orchestration, the technicalities of which are only mastered by instruction and study. His chosen instrument of earlier years had been the piano, and his compositions for it had shown the requisite knowledge of both the possibilities and limitations of that fixed tone instrument. To turn to strings and wind, meant just that same insight into their tonality, and for a certain period of his life Schumann held aloof from the courses with which even genius cannot dispense for even the simplest of orchestral works.

In middle life Schumann changed this aloofness from rules and technicalities, to an ardour for their study, with the result the Symphony in B flat major was given to the world; a work in which one finds much of the composer's great characteristic—that of tuning one's mind to the sombre, the apprehensive. Other symphonies followed, all of which show breadth of treatment, great thematic originality, and an entire absence of influence—that is to say, no resemblance can be

traced to those written by Haydn, Beethoven or Mozart. A great favourite with an audience is what goes by the name of the "Rhenish Symphony," concerning which all sorts of fancies are provided by our programmes, and to which we can add our own under its strong emotional appeal.

With the Russian school came new elements into symphonic construction, and the name of Tchaïkovsky naturally comes first under our notice. The first performance of his "Pathétique" symphony established him perhaps rather extravagantly in the English musical world. For a time it became the fashion on the part of young academicians to find the older symphonies out of date, and barely worth the while of budding professors to study. The first and the last word in orchestration, if we were to believe these irresponsible enthusiasts, had now been said by Russia; but despite these rhapsodies there is room for our own opinion concerning the Russian features brought to tonal art. Tchaïkovsky's message is different, and it is welcome to all of us. But it does not bring the older works into the category of the tame or old-fashioned. It is often volcanic, not only in the "Pathétique," but also in the five other symphonies. In all six, there are movements of incompar-

able grace, a grace arrived at by rhythmic settings not found in older works. A noticeable instance is the subject in five time in the "Pathétique."

Great rushes of chromatic effects make, too, a feature of any Russian symphony: torrents of half-tones which often bewilder the listener, making it difficult for him to follow the theme. But from what can only seem to many a confusion of sounds, a melody is often freed—so gracious, so captivating, as to steep our senses for the moment in ecstasy, from which we are only awakened when a *presto* or *vivace* leaps from string or wind. We are the losers if we never hear the Russian symphonies, whether from the pen of Tchaïkovsky, Borodin, or those other masters whose orchestral works have yet to find their way to English programmes.



THE CLASSICAL RECITAL.



## THE CLASSICAL RECITAL.



THE recital concert is very varied in character, and is calculated to suit many tastes. It can be vocal or instrumental, this last showing divisions of its own, for there is the piano recital and the string recital, with its repertoire for the violin or violoncello as the case may be.

The programme is also a matter of great variety. There is the entirely classical one, in which we find the solo suite and sonata predominating, and that which lists works of more romantic character, such as the fantaisie, etude, rhapsody, prelude, nocturne and romance, the impromptu, novellette, capriccio and humoresque. The catalogue would be a bulky one indeed that includes all the works of this character, for it gathers to itself yet further items as new composers invent fresh forms in which to present the music of their age.

On its strictly classical side the sonata and the

suite, as already mentioned, come generously into the recital programme. Some artists, as our readers know, provide only the former for any one recital, an arrangement which many consider errs on the side of monotony. The choice in regard to both kinds of works is a large one, for their lineage is long, and bears the impress of many ages, many hands, and many lands.

The Bach piano suite is specially beloved of the recital soloist, for in this composition there is opportunity in a great many directions for the display of musical skill. The feeling for technique can be indulged in one moment, and that for fine tonality in another. The emotion of the moment can be expressed eloquently in this subject, and the desire to dance irresponsibly to life's piping in that.

Bach's piano suites include the set known as the French suites, and those which come under the covering title of partitas and inventions. In the main they are built up of the prelude, allemande, sarabande, courante and gigue. Changes are rung, however, on the aria, the fantaisie, the rondo, scherzo and fugue. The first five have already been described in our chapter on the orchestral suite.

In ordinary aimless converse it is by no means



unusual to hear Bach's piano suites referred to as dry, old-fashioned, and excellent as studies. A little questioning, however, will frequently show these opinions to come from chatterers who have never heard them, who have never known the fascination of playing or studying them. On the mere evidence of Bach as their creator, these works stand condemned in idle causeries—the causeries that do so much to foster the superficial in every branch of art.

It does not require many classical recital attendances perhaps to convince a listener that the soloist who can render a Bach suite in its right spirit is the ideal pianist. In all its movements there is the demand for the rare and now nearly obsolete virtue in art known as restraint. There is the need, too, for each note to be approached and left with an almost transcendental appreciation of its tonal values. Further, there must be an unerring instinct for rhythm and accent, and perfect submission to the requirements of the *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. Even a slight acquaintance with Bach, shows us that in his works there are gradations of light and shade subtle as those an artist finds in a sky of tender greys.

The sonata by careful reading can be traced stage by stage in its developments from the suite

to a definite form of its own. Something of its history on broader lines is sufficient to take with us to the recital concert. The name in its literal translation means little sound, and under this humble title it grew in structure on Italian soil. Its early builders were Passacaglio, Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti, and others of this famous school.

It was in favour with these older musicians more as a violin than as a harpsichord work; its place as a keyed-instrument composition only being firmly established as later composers took it in hand. A vast store of harpsichord sonatas were in readiness for Domenico Scarlatti—son of Alessandro Scarlatti and the virtuoso of his day.

These sonatas, many of which are still in existence, are amazing in their range of musical ideas when we consider how poor an instrument inspired their creation. We can put to flight, too, the thought that there was nothing of the tumult of modern times to express in these older works. The tumult was there, and in the thin tones of the clavier and harpsichord it could be heard at the bidding of genius, for genius never quarrels with its tools.

We can only see dimly into the past if we fancy the sonata made its growth in a cold and unimpassioned atmosphere. Domenico Scarlatti

played to an audience hot with the passions of war and feud, to men swayed by the power of love and hate, as does the virtuoso of our modern concert room. And he played the scores of men who wrote them when battles raged and factions threatened states. It would be well to take these thoughts with us to our classical concerts, leaving our antiquarian ones at home.

In much poverty, too, men provided for new shoots to the sonata's growth, and in its clutches they penned movements as rich in musical phrases as their chambers were poor in worldly goods. Our reading hours are filled up with perusing books that tell the fashioning of empires. Do we neglect too much those volumes whose pages could burn into our souls what went to the making of our recital sonata—the structure that lives when empires pass away?

The German school of sonata writing brings vividly before us the names of Bach, his son, Emmanuel Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schubert and Schumann. Nearer to our own times we find that of Brahms. Bach's sonatas were on the older model of two movements, for until the harpsichord came into use, slow subjects unsuited to the clavier were not written.

The sustained character of an adagio needs

fullness of tone on part of a keyed instrument, and composers of the sonata-building period had too sure an instinct for tonal requirements to create scores which would sound feeble in execution.

The harpsichord whose construction more nearly approached our modern piano was soon provided with noble largos and adagios. Some of these crept in a little timidly at first, with turns and other grace notes provided as devices for helping out a tone that was still of meagre quality. The sonata form for the harpsichord was finally fixed by Emanuel Bach, son of the great Sebastian. With room for a little variation on the part of any special composer, his structure was built up of four movements on the older suite model. To examine a score so modelled, is to find the first subject rather florid in character, and the second one grave. The third is generally a scherzo, and the fourth an allegro, rondo or fugue.

The first movement is divided into two subjects, for which reason it is spoken of as being in binary form. The first subject is written in the key of its signature, in other words its tonic key. For the second, a key five notes higher, and known as the dominant is used. To make this point clear, were the former in the key of G major, the latter would be in D major.

The second movement is again in a different key to the tonic; sometimes in the dominant, but frequently in one of the five related or other nearly connected keys. Information concerning the keys in this family relationship can be found in any elementary harmony treatise. The final movement is mostly in the key of the first one.

A certain variety of form is noticeable in many of Beethoven's sonatas. There is the one in A flat, for instance, which opens with a melodious andante, which is followed by variations. A funeral march comes into this, and the final allegro is preceded by a minuet as well as by a scherzo.

The so-called "Moonlight" starts with an adagio, an allegretto and trio coming next in their order. The former of these is quite in the nature of a scherzo, though the title is not used.

The intensity of their character is proof perhaps of Beethoven's almost complete surrender to the appeal of the sonata's largo and adagio, at the close of which we know relief will come in the scherzo and often almost rollicking finale.

In Schumann's sonatas we recognise similar profundity and similar relief. Schubert and Weber keep us more in the light in their slow movements, and we may write the same of Haydn. In the case of all these three composers, at no time

does there seem more than a veil between us and the noonday sun. Their quicker subjects are bright and sparkling. Well played they would lighten the heaviest burdens, for they bring us the spirit of the downs and their life-giving breeze. The double piano sonata by Mozart is still the joy of pianists and their audience, though written for the *salons* when courtiers wore perruques and carried jewelled swords.

With Brahms the sonata becomes the field of intensified emotions into which there come contrasts that only genius can wring from musical forms. There is a fusion of sounds too, in a Brahms sonata that shows an age ready with richer harmonies. A certain restlessness is brought to the sonata by this freer modulation—a freedom to keep in check in an epoch which shows a tendency to overlook the need of repose and outline in art.

The atmosphere of a Liszt pianoforte sonata may be considered as over tempestuous perhaps.

In stormy passages the listener is made to feel that the breaking point of technique is at hand, and that the pianola is more fitted for their expression than a pianist's fingers and brain. The Abbé Liszt is great, however, in some of the

themes, and phrases abound in which one finds his real poetic spirit.

Though so little suited to their particular style of composition, both Chopin and Grieg wrote piano sonatas. One is down to each of their names, that by Chopin having the "Funeral March" as its most important feature.

England has her older sonata period in the time of Purcell, whose works in this direction are being revived at our recital concerts. They show good form, and many tender fancies. Our modern English composers, too, reveal great activity in sonata writing. These works are well to the fore, and amongst them are many which have the right to live, and to be handed down to posterity.





THE CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT.



## THE CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT.



WHAT exactly comes under the heading of chamber music is a little obscure, perhaps, for more meanings attach to it than the one for which it was originally created, namely, to mark the distinction between ecclesiastical and secular works.

But with the development of music on its secular side, the inpourings of the suite, symphony, concerto and opera, chamber music had to make distinctions of its own, and reserve for the title works that required neither a great number of instruments, nor large concert rooms for their performance. The halls of the nobles, the *salons* of the palace, and the modest chamber of the subject made its field, and with its position defined, composers in a long succession, and of many nationalities, have devoted to its service some of their highest inspirations.

Its repertoire is the trio, quartet, quintet, sextet and septet: solo works, or those for two instruments, such as piano and strings, being reserved

more or less for the recital, itself an offshoot from the chamber music concert.

That chamber music is classical in character is tradition. But here again meanings may be obscure, the tendency being to employ the term rather loosely. The result of such latitude shows itself in many works being classed as classical for the mere reason that they are set in the older musical forms. A work of art can only rank as classical if it survives its generation, and can make good its appeal in its own, whether presented in the forms of its day, or in those of an age gone by. For composers to overlook these claims to the title of classic, is to throw chamber music on the world more suggestive of laborious striving, than of any particular message from their muse.

The accepted representative feature of a chamber music programme is the quartet, rendered by first and second violins, viola and violoncello; instruments arranged on the vocal quartet lines of treble, alto, tenor and bass. The earliest Italian chamber quartets were written for four voices, two names amongst their composers being those of Peri and Caccini.

The instrumental quartet in its present form owes its now well-defined character to Haydn. In the main, its movements are a bright quick open-

ing, followed by the largo or adagio, a scherzo, and the final presto or allegro. In Haydn's eighty-three quartets, many of which charm us to-day, the interest is centred in the first violin, a mode of treatment modified by Mozart, who gave more character to the other string parts. In this direction Beethoven took the further step of equalising all four scores, and his quartets in consequence show an interplay of parts that might bewilder the listener, but for the master-hand that fashioned the web-like device.

In listening to Schubert's quartets we find again an entrancing balance of parts, and the busiest of bows, as sparkling phrases skip from string to string. Schumann is another composer, and Brahms yet another, in whose quartets we can hear each part in seeming independence, and perfect ensemble at the bidding of the score. Mendelssohn, however, inclined to the earlier form of craftsmanship; that of bringing the first violin into high relief, the other strings acting as accompaniment.

In Dvorák's quartets there flash all kinds of national fancies from the fine old forms. These dazzle and subdue us in turn, and at times almost threaten to overpower the listener with their emotional excitement.

There are musicians who place the string quartet on the highest pinnacle of musical expression, the contention being that the tonality of four-stringed instruments in ensemble is purer than that afforded by any other instrumental combination. But there are other forms of the quartet to consider, for the range of this instrumental work is not confined to strings. From Mozart we have three for oboe, violin, viola and violoncello, Brahms bequeathing to us several in which the piano displaces one of the other instruments. This device, though glorious as a lead, is not always safe to imitate, if the special feature of the quartet—its almost divine tonality—is to be preserved.

Passing on to other items of a chamber concert programme, we find works scored for ensembles of very varied nature. Quintets can be composed of the usual quartet instruments, with another violoncello or double bass to supply the required fifth. Two 'cellos, two violas and a double bass make another combination, Mozart's incomparable Quintet in E being written for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and piano. The secret must rest with Mozart whether this particular ensemble was the well-considered one of the study, or the outcome of some fevered moment in which new

secrets were confided to him from the unseen world of sound.

The flute, oboe, viola, violoncello and harmonica provide another score for the quintet, many others being written for piano, violin, viola, violoncello and double bass. Beethoven has endowed chamber music with one for piano and wind instruments; Brahms one that takes the concert room by storm, for clarinet and strings.

As listeners to the quintet, we seem invited to every transport of feeling in turn. At one moment we are in the underworld of mystery and foreboding, while in the next we soar into the upper air of eternal light and hope. The rhythmic power of a Schumann quintet lifts us above all petty cares, and shows us life as one triumphal march towards a great beyond.

Music for the sextet contains frequent scoring for two violins, two violas and two violoncellos, several are for wind only, or wind and string in combination. Septets exhibit similar construction.

Of the trio no mention has yet been made, nevertheless it takes a very important place in chamber music. With it are associated all composers of note. Bach loved the form, and Beethoven enriched it with works that would have

settled the question of his genius, had he entered no other field of composition.

French composers in a long line lasting from Rameau and Lully to our own day, have brought notable contributions to chamber music through all its stages of development. For Rameau the post of chamber music composer was especially created by Louis XV. Queen Elizabeth was another royal patron of chamber concerts. The ensemble works of her day are of especial interest, being written in the transitional period when instrumental music was severing its bonds with vocalisation, reference to which is made in other chapters. From time to time these works are given in our concert halls, and find appreciation with listeners who do not narrow their musical outlook to any particular period; who can realise the charm of any music expressed sincerely in the spirit and forms of its day.

Tudor, Georgian and Victorian days have all produced British chamber music of varying merit. In this decade, too, our composers show an almost amazing ardour in the same direction. Their names are well before the public, and their works come into most of our chamber concert programmes.

It is possible that more chamber music from



Scandinavia might find its way to our country. Both Denmark and Sweden can show excellent works in this connection, those of Norway coming to us through Grieg. But Grieg has not a foremost place as a writer for strings, his quartet showing no particular interest. His sonatas for piano and violin are better fitted for notice in our concert recital chapters.

It is much to be regretted that the chamber music concert receives such scanty support from the general public. It is the pauper in musical ventures. For the hundreds who flock voluntarily to ballad concerts, tens will attend a chamber one, and of these a certain number on the basis of companioning a relative or friend. The announcement of the matter, too, with its season's programme, shows first cousinship to an appeal, an important paragraph of the circular being the frank admission that subscribers must be guaranteed well in advance, or the series cannot be given.

To condemn this apathy to so glorious a branch of music is easy. To suggest a possible cause is better. Frankly, then, is not this apathy due to a curious British habit of self-depreciation? The Englishman tells the outside world and himself that he is not musical. It is one of the creeds in which he is brought up and accepts, never

questioning its proof. In youth he forms fanciful pictures in his mind of musical enthusiasts, long-haired, questionably clothed, and doomed to unsuccessful paths in man's career. In the conversations of his elders, too, he detects the opinion that musical enthusiasm militates against all sorts of other qualities that make for manly excellence.

Brought up in such a school of thought, is it wonderful that only a small percentage of Englishmen have courage to put their musical appreciation on trial at a chamber music concert? But when the trial is made, how quickly does not the bogey character of the fugue, rondo and counterpoint disappear? The courageous Englishman who makes it, finds himself captive to them all, wondering why so many things are said for him by bows and strings that he has never been able to say for himself. Only a few more chamber music tickets will be needed to convince him that because a man cannot sing or play, he is not unmusical, and that music can make as strong an appeal on its appreciative as on its executive side—a point that none should overlook.

Russian composers do not come readily to our mind perhaps as chamber music writers; they are mostly associated with opera and symphonic

compositions. But they certainly have their place in this branch of musical effort. They have proved their admiration for the traditions of chamber music, and they have worked hard to preserve them and secure a substantial footing for them in those Russian musical circles that had formerly shown a certain apathy to the classical side of their muse.

No greater enthusiast for classical music existed, perhaps, than Taneiev, whose death took place in 1915. As a proof of his sincerity, he abandoned the strenuously earned position of a virtuoso that he might devote all his time and labour towards promoting sound classical training for rising Russian musicians. His efforts succeeded in proportion to his earnestness, and to his credit may be placed Russia's present position in classical craftsmanship. Fine Russian contrapuntalists now follow each other in rapid succession. His own chamber music shows superlative insight into the requirements of ensemble composition; but as they reveal a little too much perhaps of the machinery of his art, they are better suited to the study than the concert hall.

Borodin shows himself not only a great lover of chamber music, but in order to get at its very unction, so to speak, he studied the playing of

strings in order that he might make one of its performers. He has a place as trio, sextet and concerto writer, his compositions winning great admiration in Germany, especially with Liszt. In Italy, too, great enthusiasm exists for the classical side of Borodin, an enthusiasm shared in by English musicians.

But numerous other Russian names must come into chamber music writing, many of them hard to memorise, despite the fact of their place in to-day's posters and programmes. They include those of Balakirev, Dargomijsky, Cui, Tchaïkovsky, Arensky, Scriabine, Moszkowski, Rachmaninov and Rubinstein. Others might follow did space allow.

In Russian chamber music there are unquestionably many new elements offered to an audience. Some of them, on first hearing, perhaps, seem composed of strange inspirations, and discussions are not infrequent as to whether this music is music at all, so numerous are the discords, so erratic the rhythmic values.

But these features need not be viewed as essentially Russian. The modern tendency in all countries is to provide us with new tonalities, not all of which have come to stay, though the ex-

tremists, who are found in every walk of life, assure us that each is necessary for musical progress.

For the moment we might almost seem to be in danger of the masterpieces that charmed a St. James's Hall audience in the seventies being consigned to the musical scrapheap at the bidding of younger schools. There is always the temporary and the permanent in art, however, and we do not hesitate to add that it is the privilege of the concert audience to make choice of what is to go, and what is to remain.

The restless pushing to the front of modern chamber music will give place, should concert lovers demand it, to the more temperate proceeding of allowing the old and the new to be heard in turn. There is nothing to fear on the score of comparison if the latter is good of its kind, and not a mere caricature of what has gone before. That there is room for both could soon be proved, with which reassuring remark we now close our chapter on the chamber music concert.



THE VARIED RECITAL.





## THE VARIED RECITAL.



IN addition to the two kinds of recitals which have already received attention in these pages, there still remains another to be considered. For want of a better title we will call this "The Varied Recital," for it does not confine itself to strictly classical music nor to one particular instrument. It is not unusual to find programmed in such a concert, a pianist, a singer, and a violin or violoncello player. The repertoire may show a mixture of the smaller kind of classical works and those known as romantic, under more or less fanciful titles.

A recital arranged on these lines is very acceptable, for it varies the sensations of the listeners, who are sometimes apt to weary of compositions that are similar in feeling and form. Individual choice can be suited, too, a great point this; as any given audience shows widely different taste in regard to favourite composers and musical works.

Many artists incline to the mixed programme for the well-considered reason that it enables them to prove their powers of interpretation. To convince an audience that their technique and musical insight is as good in one branch of music as another. The press is always ready with its criticisms on this question of interpretation, but it is best to form our own opinions in the matter, and by so doing to add to the many interests and pleasures a concert ticket affords us.

On the side of the older small musical works, the varied recital will bring to its programme the minuet, gavotte, scherzo, rondo, toccata, ricadon, musette, tambourin, and a host of similar compositions. Some of these, former chapters have shown to be linked up with sonatas, symphonies and suites; but they serve as solos as well, and as such may take an important place in instrumental music.

The toccata has yet to be explained. Like a good deal of the music of its period it is bright and florid in character, built up of trills and shakes and a ripple of arpeggios and scales. It is a busy little scheme of notes in which one finds the barest suggestion of a definite theme. The tambourin has found charming treatment with Rameau. It is a dance of Moorish origin, as is

the tarantella, another of the dance inspirations of the older masters.

The musette owes its instrumental form to a grave type of dance. It can be recognised by a drone kind of bass which is very fascinating, but a little difficult to carry out on the piano. This difficulty must have been even greater in the days of the harpsichord. A pianist sometimes groups with the musette, the saltarello and the siciliano. The former gives a dance idea of a lively nature, and in its piano setting there is easily detected the hopping, almost jumping step of its old ball-room dancers.

The latter is a sketchy little composition, pastoral in feeling, and suggestive of quiet hedge-rows and running brooks. The ricandon, spelt sometimes rigaudon—is another dance that has inspired quaint reposeful themes.

Another item for the varied programme is the fantaisie, both in its old and newer romantic form. Its character is somewhat indefinite, and in not a few instances seems rather that of an improvisation. Its fascination is only felt when the rambling tendency is kept in proper check. A Beethoven fantaisie is delightful. It is never so indefinite as to suggest weakness; and in its rippling spontaneity suggests the composer in too

dreamy a mood to guide his inspirations into the channels of musical form.

It was under the title of *fantaisie* that several movements all more or less light in their nature were grouped at the time the sonata was shaping itself. The same name was given to early orchestral scores when instruments first found some better occupation than to accompany madrigals. This accompanying was the mere primitive device of playing in unison with the voices according to their parts; such as first violins with trebles, second violins with altos, bass and tenor instruments coupling up with vocalists of corresponding pitch.

Bringing the fantasia down the ladder of time nearer to our own day, we find a Schumann work of this character in rather different vein to a Beethoven model. A more serious view of life is expressed in the score, and even in its lightest passages we never seem out with the butterflies. Nor do we find any suggestion of the improvising mood in the Schumann G minor Fantasia; all inclines to great strength of form and definite phrases.

The capriccio is yet another of the compositions for present consideration. Free use of this was made by the early composers. Those of a middle

period turned to it, too, for the presenting of tonal ideas unsuited to the sonata's more definite outline. Even in our own times, much that is pleasing to listen to finds its way to the concert room under the old Italian title. The capriccio, indeed, offers one of the many examples of the latest creative talent clinging to almost venerable names and structures, for presenting newer musical fancies.

In the case of the English early instrumental writers, fantasies take an important place. Old editions, however, often show the more English-sounding title of fancies. These "fancies" do not always reveal themselves as absolutely separate compositions; frequently they are many isolated dance subjects strung together by some little musical device of an insignificant nature. Fantasias of many kinds came from the hands of Purcell; but to list these and all the other instrumental dance themes handed down by the old English composers would make an undue call on our reader's attention. Many of them find their way into a varied programme. On the whole, perhaps, they are reserved for the kind of concert that offers what is known as "old world" music.

"Old world" music could very reasonably

count as a covering term for vast numbers of musical works performed in our concert rooms. That English scores on their ancient side more or less monopolise it, is doubtless for the reason that antique instruments such as the lute, harpsichord, viola da gamba, viol d'amore, and even virginals, are so often used for their interpretation.

To go back to the toccata, one might mention here how often this old model, too, is employed for the setting of quite recent compositions. Debussy's toccata has shown itself a great favourite with the recital artist, but it is not every member of an audience who is convinced that the inspiration and the form come into the same musical plane. Between a toccata by Paradies, and a toccata by Debussy, there is room for a little reflection.

It is in listening to this particular work by the latter composer that one reflects how often new and startling effects in art are only novel in the sense of their having been revived. Debussy prided himself on having struck out in new directions in harmony, but centuries back the same harmonies had been tried and rejected by Rameau.

There are few recitals of the varied kind in which quite a number of Chopin's works are not

heard. Choice falls in turn on his etudes, preludes, nocturnes, waltzes, ballads, scherzi, impromptus, rondos, mazurkas and polonaises. Various smaller works, too, come into the list.

In some cases the names chosen by Chopin for his compositions are a little misleading. The etudes, for instance, must not be viewed as exercises for obtaining phenomenal technique. Chopin wrote them more as psychical experiences, for they are studies in emotions. The pianist who plays them at headlong speed with the Niagara Falls in his mind as a guide to effects, overlooks this inner meaning.

All shades of feeling come into them—the heights and depths of passion, the calm of peaceful moments, and the airy grace of joyous moods.

It is not many, perhaps, who listen to Chopin's works who can trace any element of joy in their composition. All are supposed to reveal a strain of melancholy, to suggest some gnawing of the heart, even in life's most playful moments. But it must be realised that Chopin is generally approached by both his interpreters and his listeners in an over-sentimental spirit: as though nothing entered into his days save hopeless love, and the languor of physical weakness.

In his mazurkas there is often really vivid joy,

and their listeners can easily be transported to scenes where all thought of trouble is lost in the spirit of the dance. The polonaises suggest neither joy nor melancholy, but rather triumph, and a sense of national pride. They move majestically even when rapidly, and set our minds busy with pictures in which the polonaise was once danced, with regal ceremony.

This inspiration is the sort of processional dance which was introduced into Poland when Henry of Anjou mounted her throne. There was much spreading of trains connected with it, much bowing and curtsying, much deliberation in the taking of its varied steps. But to-day it is brought to homelier levels, and is the wedding dance of Polish peasants. Its steps are quicker, and its atmosphere no longer that of courtiers, nor of the Shakespeare "million of manners."

All sorts of other mazurkas and works on the polonaise idea come into recital programmes than just those written by Chopin. The former were known in the sixteenth century, and their figures set for four and eight couples. They were song-dances too, as were all others at that early period. It is not to be concluded that the song-dance was carolled by the dancers, a custom which would have made for colossal fatigue. The old ar-



rangement was for singers to be in the minstrel gallery seen in all old castles, and there to sing lustily, merry or grave dances as occasion required. The dancers were in the body of the hall.

Preludes enter largely into recital programmes, those by Chopin in particular, perhaps. These as separate solo works have to be viewed differently than as mere suggestions of something greater to follow. It is very interesting to an audience to note in how many ways the prelude form is approached by the numerous composers who write in it. Its nature has already been described in another chapter.

Ballades, too, come from many hands, and charm us not a little, whatever the nationality of their composers. In those of Chopin one listens to works in which lilting melodies glide into quicker subjects. Something of the folk-song character is in these fascinating strains.

The czardas, another Polish dance, has inspired many national composers to write dainty piquant themes. This is an old Slavonic dance with a sixteen-bar subject for its start. Another subject, and sometimes a third, come into its musical scheme, which is invariably light-hearted, though never trivial in character.

The romance recital works naturally include a lengthy list under Schumann's name. His "Carnaval," "Papillons," "Nachtstücke" and Romances only represent a few of the compositions from his pen that we might expect to hear in any concert season. Nor must we omit the "Kreisleriana," though this charming set of eight quaint piano subjects might, with the "Carnaval," come under the heading of programme music.

Nocturns tell their own meaning in their name. In that of Grieg, however, the message of the night is something more than melody on rather sentimental lines. There are shivers amongst the sedge—the cry of night-birds—stealthy movements of tiny creatures in the hedgerows, and the sigh of the winds in the pine woods, in the weird little score. Grieg gave his poetic work no name clues to these miniature nature happenings. We can be grateful to him for this, for we can supply the clues for ourselves.

The violin always finds itself a welcome feature in the varied type of recital, and awaiting its repertoire is a large number of smaller works, to the making of which composers of many generations have contributed.

It is delightful to take one's ticket to hear such works as Wieniawski's moving "Legende," and

the "Sicilienne" and "Regaudon," by Francœur, Sarasate's "Tzigane," too, and often charming compositions by Wilhelmj.

The smaller seventeenth century works thread their way amongst the newer violin ones, and we find a Handel violin polonaise and "Siciliano" grouped with a mazurka of Zarzyckis. A romance of Beethoven's with a Chopin nocturne, and a fugue of Paganini's with a sparkling little theme by Sarasate.

However many the moods we take to the mixed kind of recital, there seems something to suit each, on its violin side alone.

Recitals of all kinds keep mainly to solo works. They were instituted, indeed, to bring soloists into special notice, one artist frequently sustaining the whole recital. But it must be a matter of individual taste as to whether one artist holding the platform right through the programme is music hearing in the best manner. Many prefer the changes to be rung on different performers and different sorts of instruments.

The rapid changes that are always in the air come in a very welcome manner to our recitals in one respect; for more and more when the programme is a mixed one, do we find enter into it the old English madrigal. This feature can be

doubly prized if the programme consists in the main of works in the ultra modern vein. Solos perpetually following each other too is not altogether an ideal arrangement; a fact better realised by concert managers of the past than it is by those of to-day.

A CHAPTER ON OPERA.



## A CHAPTER ON OPERA.



THE distinctive character of opera needs no emphasising. It is the great art structure which stands out clearly and singly, though at certain stages of its history it could show very few features apart from those included in the building of cantata or oratorio.

The actual beginnings of opera may be traced to the Greek play, in which were introduced such musical modes as were known to the Hellenes. Historians tell us that music had no part in the action of classical drama, all singing being reserved for the chorus, which at appointed places chanted verses to the accompaniment of lyres and flutes. The lyrics were sometimes employed for the elucidation of certain incidents in the drama, and sometimes for voicing the supposed reflections and moralising on part of the spectators. In this union of drama, and the tonal art, it is easy to realise that the tragedians of ancient Greece recognised the power of music in the heightening

of emotion; and that their instinct was the same as that which centuries later led to the making and development of operatic form.

But between the Greek plays and the founding of opera, there came the mystery plays, in which music and drama again came hand in hand to the stage. Even in these representations, the old classical order of keeping music apart from the action on the stage was religiously observed. All singing was reserved for the chorus, for which chants were written that differed little from those used in the service of the church. For a very considerable period these mystery plays satisfied both the dramatic and musical aspirations of mediæval Europe.

But in the fourteenth century a very important step to the final one of opera was taken in Italy, by the introduction of improvised dramatic representations at the close of carnivals and masques. Into these there came a much freer use of music than had been the case with Greek tragedies and the mystery plays. It is true that all action in these improvisations was still kept well apart from music, but much stronger effects were striven for in madrigal singing which was now carried out by well trained vocalists. The impressive name of *intermezzo* too was given to the madrigal,



and room made for its frequent performance throughout the representation. The singers worked together to create certain impressions, and recognised the value of each other's contributions. Music and the drama were strengthening their union.

For rather a long period no further steps towards musical drama were taken than this improving of the intermezzo. Inspiration seemed at a standstill, for though the madrigal under Willaert's guidance had been enriched by harmonised settings, no attempt to give it melody of any real value had been made by either Italian or Flemish musicians. Its strains were still monotonous, and strongly reminiscent of the Gregorian modes from which it had sprung in earlier days.

The need of development was felt, but a certain inertia had come to the musical schools which it needed some stirring event to overcome. This arrived, as is often the case, very unexpectedly. According to musical history, one of the semi-religious intermezzi had been sung between the scenes of a little drama included in the wedding festivities of a Florentine nobleman. As verses of a joyous nature had been chanted to a decidedly sombre strain, all present, the musicians in particular, had felt the ill relationship between the

music and the words. It was a moment in which to realise that some entirely new flight in composition was necessary for the creation of musical drama.

Activity followed very quickly on this realisation, and as at a signal the poets, composers, actors and cultured laymen of Tuscany directed effort to the making of drama-per-musica. In this great circle, too, several women were included whose fame in poetry and music was already established. In quite a short time after the famous wedding banquet theme, "Pastorals," the libretti by the poetess, Laura Guidiccioni, were set to music by Caccini (a composer already mentioned in other chapters) and performed before an admiring audience. The enthusiasm spread, and encouraged by the efforts of Caccini, Peri, another Tuscan composer, wrote the epoch-making "Euridice," which all musical savants view as a work of real if primitive operatic structure. The whole action of this drama was sung in the form of solos, recitative and chorus, the two former accompanied by a single instrument: a great orchestral triumph being a theme of sixteen bars written for three flutes to play as intermezzo.

Composers all on fire to emulate Peri seemed now to spring out of Italy's soil, and every Tus-

can musician produced his drama-per-musica. By the year 1650 over six hundred works came into being styled as "melodrama," "tragedia per musica," or "tragi-comedia," according to the nature of their plots. About 1660 the covering title of "opera in musica" was adopted for all such productions, only to be shortened into opera a year or so later. The title is not poetic, but in its literal meaning of "works" it may be considered as appropriate, for it is a structure composed from many spheres of art.

But many of the Italian operas written in such outburst of zeal were of poor artistic value, exception being made for those of Monteverde, the great madrigal writer. His "Orpheus" is turned to even now by musicians as worthy of their study. This work contains the first operatic love-duet, and in its orchestration is shown Monteverde's improvements over his contemporaries' scores. While the latter were written mainly for wind, and about two violins, that for "Orpheus" contained parts for ten violins and a well-proportioned number of other string instruments.

It is to this composer we owe the foundations of our modern orchestra, and when listening to opera to-day, we can let our minds steal back to the master who understood in so great a degree the

art of combining instruments of different timbre. Monteverde, it may be added, never arranged for more than one instrument to accompany the solo voice. This super feeling for vocal tonality was shown by many other composers of his school.

Amongst the contemporaries of Monteverde, Cavalli takes an honourable place. This composer, the creator of over twenty operas, introduced definite melody in place of the solo recitative; an example followed by Alessandro Scarlatti, who made the solo more and more important in the hundred and more operas that came from his hand. As one very marked change in the latter's scores, the solo was given orchestral support instead of help from one single instrument, as in Monteverde's operas.

But opera was to travel, and France at this period was ready for its reception, for the reason that in the early part of the seventeenth century she already had rich stores of ballets, song plays and musical pastorals, each one of which was a step towards opera on its own distinctive lines. Lully, an Italian, taken to France in boyhood, had busied himself greatly with these compositions, and on the production of Peri's "Eurydice" in Paris, immediately turned his attention to producing operas on his own account. One after

another of these was performed in Paris, the home of his adoption, and into each came features not hitherto found in the earlier Tuscan models. The ballet—unknown in the latter—was given special prominence; and the chorus with its more impassioned type of score was brought into closer relationship with the drama. All the music, too, was written for stronger dramatic effect, and for enabling the words to convey the fullness of their meaning.

To Lully's development of opera in France there was soon added that of Rameau, who ranks highly as one of the pioneers of the grander forms of opera yet to come.

Gluck, another Frenchman, though born on foreign soil, and whose youth was spent on strong Bohemian lines, probably made his first acquaintance with opera as actor in a travelling operatic troupe. Till well over forty no great work had come from this composer's pen, but in his fiftieth year there came his first opera, followed quickly by seven others of no epoch-making character.

But with the arrival in turn of "Orpheus," "Alceste," "Iphigenia," "Paris" and "Helen," the fame of early French opera was established for all time.

"Orpheus" can to-day always draw its audi-

ence. It was written when Italian opera on its solo side was passing through a stage of effeminate and over-florid design. Gluck worked hard against this degeneracy, and scored grand simple melody in which the opportunity for pure vocal tone was provided with consummate art. Later centuries have produced few airs that move us more, whether in opera or the concert room, than "Che Faro." Gluck's self-imposed mission was to keep out of opera all frivolous elements—to make lofty ideals as discernible on its musical side as on that of its libretto.

Gluck's choice, as did that of Wagner in late centuries, fell on mythology and legend for his opera plots. But just as Grecian and Norse mythology differ in character from one another, so did the creative aims of the two composers. "Orpheus" and the "Ring" stand at opposite ends of the musical pole. Yet another meeting place for their spirits was that of reform, for Wagner as well as Gluck was zealous in opposing the flamboyant elements which for a second time had crept into Italian opera.

Opera found its way into Germany through her composer, Schütze, whose intercourse with the Tuscan musicians was frequent at the time of

their labours over drama-per-musica. In this we see another instance of that intimacy existing between artists of different nationalities when questions of form and development are in the air. It is an intimacy unaffected by questions of frontier and racial differences, or the call to arms. Schütze went to and fro to Italy at this critical time in musical history, as though all the conveniences of travel were at his command, and the expenses no strain on a musician's slender purse. His first opera, though it made its debut in Germany, was conceived and written in Italy, and in the tongue of that country.

A few particulars may be given at this point concerning the various forms given to opera by composers, as time progressed and national taste seemed to inspire.

Opera seria, as the name implies, is opera of a serious nature. Caccini, Peri, Lully and Gluck all wrote this type of music-drama.

Opera bouffe—or, to give it its Italian name, opera bouffa—and opera comique must be considered as distinctive from each other, despite the fact that a peep into a dictionary will reveal "comic" as the English for both.

The former represents the Italian reaction from

the earnest-minded works of foregoing composers; its tunes more those of caricature than subtle humour.

In the French opera comique there is greater refinement of wit; wit of the Frankish order, which comes in flashes and takes us unawares.

Yet another distinction between the two classes of opera is that in the case of opera bouffa, recitative is closely adhered to. In opera comique, it is only used sparingly, spoken dialogue being freely employed in its place.

Grand opera is that in which all is musically expressed. Dialogue is entirely absent from its structure, and the plot so handled by the musician as to give each scene its greatest emotional value. Great causes generally lie at the heart of the grand opera plots.

Mozart was the founder of the conversational opera, also of what goes under the name of serio-comic opera, "The Marriage of Figaro" being of this type. Although humour abounds in this opera, it is humour in relief to the serious. There is true pathos in the Countess's appealing song, and equally a true spirit of gaiety in the parts of Figaro and Susanna. Mozart's other three operas of this type are "Don Giovanni," "Il Seraglio" and "The Magic Flute." In all of these joy and



sorrow are brought into close proximity. The last-named was the first fairy opera written. "*Così Fan Tutti*" is comic opera entirely. By the time of Mozart's early death, opera, it can be seen, had branched out in many directions. Tragic, comic, and a blend of the serious and comic, were forms all ready for Weber; likewise the fairy opera to which this last composer devoted the winning music of "*Oberon*."

"*Oberon*" is sometimes viewed as the forerunner of the Rhine Maiden *motif*. It is a weaker production than Weber's other three operas, "*Der Freischütz*," "*Preciosa*" and "*Euryanthe*." All these last are of human interest, may be looked upon as romantic opera: "*Der Freischütz*," a picturesque blend of the homely, the romantic and the supernatural.

Mozart, it can be noticed, showed no reforming zeal in his opera writing. He called new forms into being, and busied himself with scores that have proved themselves immortal, for whatever libretto took his fancy at the moment. He was always brimming over with things to say in his own language, and he said them. He felt no mission to displace existing methods of opera writing, but threw his works upon the world to take their chance amongst those that had already gained

popular favour. And, as we know in our own decades, Mozart's operas never retire for long. If newer works displace them for a while, it is only that they may reappear on the musical horizon with their brilliancy undiminished, their lustre undimmed by the neglect of a generation laid to dust.

At this point it can be seen that the history of opera covers a period of over two hundred years. If attention has been asked for even quite its earliest stages, it is for the reason that the love of music-drama heightens for every item of knowledge taken with us to the opera house.

The zealous picture lover would soon lose his enthusiasm, if no galleries existed in which he could trace the stages through which painting has passed. If he knows his Raphael, his Holbein, his Paul Delaroche, he also knows his Giotto and can gaze admiringly at a Madonna, which, for all its stiffness, glows through the centuries with the ardour of the spirit that conceived it. Happily for the picture enthusiast, the history of the art he loves is made an open book to him by home and foreign galleries. For the music-lover it is different, only now and again is it made possible for him to find the connecting links between

highly developed musical forms and those from which they sprang.

Could we hear the operas of Monteverde or Scarlatti to-day, there would be, it is true, no ecstasies for us of the kind we know in a Tristan love duet; none of that wealth of tonal beauty to which our ears are accustomed. But we should find in their scores, as does a picture-lover in a Giotto canvas, a message of noble striving to win a place, however small, in the sacred shrine of art. In this, is no mean joy.

That Beethoven considered one venture in opera enough, should be convincing of his marvellous grasp of the true character of opera; for if this structure is to be a blend of several arts, an almost super-question of degree is involved. On its musical side the hold on the senses must not be greater than that of the other arts employed. Scenery, plot, and the action of the drama, all have an equal right in regard to our consciousness, and Beethoven's music, which seizes on our imagination right away, so to speak, could only play the giant's part when all should show a perfect balance. What can be said truly of Beethoven can be said with equal truth of Bach, who was never tempted to devote his genius to the service of drama-per-musica.

England's activity in the development of opera up to a certain stage of its development shows great freedom and independence of thought, for the musical history of England had been an unbroken one from the days of Alfred the Great to those of Peri himself. Italian opera came to our shores to find English musicians not only busy with music for masques and plays, but with works already bearing the magic name of opera. Purcell was even then in the field, and with laurels won for his "Dido and Æneas," written in his eighteenth year. L'everidge, another English composer, produced opera in 1705, but, having studied music in Italy, his scores showed signs, and these not happy ones, of Italian influence. This influence unfortunately remained, and with Purcell's early death English opera assumed a mongrel character that made it neither English nor Italian. For several years opera died out altogether in our country, a foothold being once more secured for it with "The Beggar's Opera," a mere composite structure of ballads and country dance music of the day. One might almost blush to think how when other nations were making giant strides in operatic art, this strange pot-pourri was received enthusiastically by an English audience. But, sham or not in itself, "The Beggar's Opera" gave

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rise to the ballad form of opera, which for many years held its own on the English stage. Handel's efforts to re-establish real English opera writing, provided their own death-blow in his slavish adherence to those very Italian features against which Germany and France, nay, even Italy herself, were in revolt.

Into the period which lies between Mozart and Wagner, composers illustrious in one or other of the now well-established opera forms appeared in France, Italy and Germany. Cherubini, as writer both of grand opera and opera comique, showed great affection for plots which had for their basis tragedies of the French revolution. Two of his French contemporaries, Gossec and Breton, found their muse in revolutionary subjects. Spontini, in his romantic form of opera, infused into its scores the military atmosphere of his hero Napoleon, to write all of which is to suggest to what a great extent the history of a nation voices itself in music, a fact too often overlooked.

The next spirit to be noticed in grand opera is that awakened by the themes of contemporary and mediæval poets. This awakening brought Auber's "Masaniello," Rossini's "William Tell," Halévy's "La Juive," with its story of bitter struggle between Christian and Jew. Meyerbeer in his own

day was considered great in grand opera, for which "Robert le Diable" and "Les Huguenots" were written. "Robert toi que j'aime," that intensely dramatic recitative and aria from the former, will always survive criticism in its power to excite the singer and her audience.

Verdi, Donizetti, Bellini and Flotow have all left us opera in its most romantic form. Situations of strong and realistic love interest are discerned in their melodies, which in turn are so mocking, pleading and sensuously passionate. Opera of this kind finds itself in and out of favour in this or that decade. When the pendulum swings in their favour, the chance is given us of hearing scores in which the voice part stands out clearly, and with opportunities for a play of vocal tone often denied it by more modern schools.

Recent decades have shown musicians of all opera-writing countries, including our own, very faithful to the romantic type of music drama. Mascagni, Puccini, Bizet, Charpentier, d'Erlanger, Leoncavallo, Debussy, Delius and Ethel Smyth, and other British composers, are all names we know intimately in this connection. Notable exceptions are offered in Saint-Saëns's "Samson and Delilah," Strauss's "Electra" and Massenet's "Thaïs." In the scores of many of these writers,

there can be traced the influence of Wagner, the tendency to provide great schemes of modulation for the orchestra, rather than definite well-sustained themes.

The day has gone by when a ticket for a Wagnerian opera was taken in awe, in the apprehension that something bewildering and brain-racking would be the only reward of our outlay. There was a fearsome ring about "Music of the Future" more than a quarter of a century back. A sinister suggestion in the phrase that such musical knowledge it was our pride to possess was only fit for the melting-pot. That operas which had hitherto enthralled us were so much waste paper to be cast on the waters of forgetfulness. Wagnerian operas are taken quietly now, in turn with, and not to the exclusion of others written before the days of Bayreuth influences.

It is quite open to a Wagnerian audience to consider the "Music of the Future" in one respect, as music of the past. For the composers of the period immediately following on that of Monteverde laboured to get rid of the recitative in exchange for the solo, duet, and other ensemble items. Wagner revived the recitative: has made it in some instances continuous to the point considered wearisome by some of his listeners. This

is reminiscent of really ancient opera. But he retained the solo melody and all such features as duets, trios and ensemble, if any of his music dramas seemed to demand them. We need hardly remind our readers of Senta and the Dutchman's duet; of that between Ortrud and Elsa in "Lohengrin," and the thrilling two-part subject given to Siegmund and Sieglinde in the "Valkyrie."

It is not to the music of the future, too, that the leitmotiv owes its origin; for Berlioz introduced this feature into his orchestration several years before "Tannhäuser" was given to the world. Wagner made very moderate use of the device in his earlier operas, but this restraint lessened, till in time "Parsifal" is found with sixty-three such leading phrases.

Wagner, it is not always remembered, preferred the name "music drama" to that of opera. It was an essential part of his creed that drama was paramount in the union of libretto and tonal art; the score on all occasions to be subservient to dramatic requirements. The librettist and the composer, he considered, should be invested in the one man, who was to check all impulse in moments of creative exaltation to write irrespectively of the verse, or the action of the plot. Wagner, in his



great devotion to Arthurian legend and Norse mythology for his plots, shows little sign of being followed, which is wise, for not many could walk with safety the path this Titan has trodden.

Wagner's operas have suffered from extravagant attitudes on the part of the public, as have all great art movements. There is the circle that finds in these works the only music, the only drama; and the circle that holds aloof from them, that stifles any lurking desire to hear "The Ring" and its wonderful companions.

Musical ruts of this kind are tragic, for they spell suicide to the musical spirit. To cling to one kind of opera, and button up our pockets when the other is programmed, shows that we are already on the highway to no opera at all, are on the route to those dull regions where life is passed without the lifting power of music.

A few visits to Covent Garden on Wagner nights can be very convincing that the gods, goddesses, giants and mortals that belong to Norse legend have their right musical setting, that the passions of Valhalla would be poorly expressed in the vocalisation and orchestration we find in Verdi or Mozart. The wail of Senta's song, too, is the wail that belongs to the heroine of legend; that brings us sensations we do not know when listen-

ing to the fervid songs of Carmen. On this score of new sensations alone, Wagner can prove his right, perhaps, to a place in our musical life; can justify our presence on those nights when the curtain rises to the opening strains of "Parsifal," "Tristan" or "Lohengrin."

Many composers of various nationalities write opera now on the lines for which Wagner fought, though for their plots they may turn to neither legend nor mythology. Elaborate vocalisation does not return, however, and probably no operatic score in the future will provide the trilling ornate solo and duet that Wagnerian decrees condemned.

BALLET MUSIC AND DRAMA.



## BALLET MUSIC AND DRAMA.



O speak of ballet music to-day is at once to turn one's mind to the Russian ballet which in pre-war years came to Covent Garden, with the wand of success in its hand.

But there are many things to understand about ballet quite apart from its Russian interest, many points to be made clear upon concerning its history, its music, its place as mere figure dancing, or as dancing associated with mime of more or less elaborate character.

At any ordinary concert of the mixed programme type we can often hear ballet music, written with no other purpose than that of providing an instrumental score of the lighter kind. That this is classified under the distinguishing name of "ballet" merely means that it is music for our more trivial moods, moods in which we can feel the lure of the dance, and see visions of Pan and his pipes. Even the most serious-minded composers find pleasure in writing ballet music, in

allowing bright fancies of the stage or the village fête to guide their pens in the hallowed moments of inspiration. Quite apart from any operatic or actual stage dancing connection, a good deal of this kind of ballet music has been written in the past, is being scored in the present, and will doubtless find liberal publication in the future.

Music for ballet dancing in which mime has no part has shown no lack of composers from the early part of the sixteenth century. This stands quite apart from that written for the old partner and figure form of dancing, such as pavane, gavotte and the like. The need for the former arose with those early ballets which delighted Venetian court life about 1588. All that could please the eye in the way of sumptuous setting and varied movements was found in these displays, the fame of which quickly spread to other parts of Italy.

France, as may easily be supposed, soon arranged for ballet in its different forms to provide one of her court diversions. Louis XIII, as its first Royal patron, appointed his own private musical director as organiser of stage dancing, into none of which, as yet, came the ballerino, men supporting all the rôles. This director, named Boessel, and a contemporary composer between

them wrote nearly forty scores, the greater number of which were for ballet on its mimi side.

To peep back into the reign of Louis XIV is to find ballet placed in a somewhat ridiculous position, for that pompous monarch, soon ill-contented to remain a mere spectator, insisted on assuming all the more important rôles himself. His courtiers, too, clamoured for "parts," many of whom, like their Royal master, were clumsy of foot and of generous bulk. Performances under such circumstances could have reached no ideal standard, and as the ballets in vogue were sung by their own corps, much panting must have been observed on the part of the coxcombs who shuffled about the polished floor in all the conceit of fancied grace and fine attire.

Lully, in order to retain the patronage of his patron, had to compose music suitable to these stage caperings. In this task the composer was probably met half-way by the ballet director, the outcome of councils being scores and programmes so arranged as to provide more opportunity for Royal limelight poses, than sprightly pirouetting.

It was Lully who introduced ballet to the operatic stage, probably for the reason that it had already been favourably received on that of ordinary drama. For Molière's ballet comedies he

had already written many scores, in most of which there is true feeling for the dancer's entrancing art. Gluck, Meyerbeer, and many others of their followers in opera inspiration, included ballet in their music dramas, not excluding Wagner, who objected so whole-heartedly to most of the operatic features already in existence.

Many of the English masques of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could be viewed as ballets, for which very captivating music was written. But development in this direction received a severe check in Puritan days. Happily the revival of ballet score writing is with us, and a welcome in readiness for any inspirations of the real dancing spirit that come from young England's musical pen. The day has gone by when it was considered derogatory to a composer's dignity to produce good ballet; it is now all to his honour, and proof positive that his talent is of that versatile nature which alone justifies devotion to his art.

Russian ballet brought us a phenomenal awakening to the beauties of music and dancing in union. Each of these as well as other arts came to us from Russia with a modernity that might have overwhelmed an audience, had the performances been less perfectly staged and executed.

Dancing has always entered largely into Rus-



sian national life, especially that of Southern or little Russia, the birthplace of many a ballerino who has captivated a London audience. Actual ballet, however, was a foreign importation, and its first creators were an Italian composer and a French *maître de danse*, who, under the patronage of an art-loving Empress, niece to Peter the Great, produced wonderful mime dancing on the Imperial private stage. For these early displays young noblemen under military instruction went into training. But by degrees recruits were found in the youth of all classes, a great school being formed and financed by the Court Exchequer. Amongst the first to enter the Russian ballet field of composition was Tchaïkovsky, whose "Oiseau d'Or" is amongst the many exciting scores that have delighted an English audience. Attracted to mimi ballet, too, have been the musicians, Borodín, Arensky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky and others—names associated with all those wonderful displays brought to our opera houses by Diaghiliev's *corps de ballet*.



THE SUITE AND THE SERENATA.



## THE SUITE AND THE SERENATA.



THE suite is a well-known item of our concert programmes, but those enjoy it most who know something of the elements which make its organic whole.

The study of these is a fascinating one. It calls for none of that dry-as-dust spirit we take to the museum or library; for the past when revealed to us in music is a living past, whose passion throbs and lighter moods beat pulse to pulse with our own.

As its name suggests, the suite is composed of a number of movements following one another, and so arranged as to bring contrast and increase of interest. The title was first used as a covering one for the old French dance tunes, written by different hands, and in different ages for a dance-loving nation. Four of these principal dances preceded by a prelude, seem to have made up most of the earlier suites; both the number and the order

being preserved by composers who adopted the form of the suite for their own inspirations.

The prelude was followed first by the allemande, and this in turn by the courante, sarabande and gigue. But in all stages of its history other dances found their way into the suite. Dances grave as a processional march, dances that in "Much Ado About Nothing" we read of as "Like the lover's wooing, hot, hasty and fantastical."

Our concert halls do not give us the old vocal suites, yet a passing word on these is scarcely out of place. Early composers, the French, in particular, used the form for bringing part-songs together, songs that as mere unharmonised melodies had been echoed from the hills for generations back. Musical historians mention the name Auxcouste, in particular, as publishing a vocal suite in the year 1652. According to most writers, it was about this period that the vocal side of music allowed the instrumental one to start a separate existence of its own. Prior to this, instruments were merely the handmaidens of the voices, the instrumental suite finding birth at the parting of the ways. Following the mere collecting of original dance tunes for the compiling of suites, came the desire of early composers to write original themes on the old dance models, themes

which should preserve all the spontaneity of the dance, and all those time divisions that make the character of any one dance in particular.

A little research shows England holding her own in this direction. Dance compositions for instruments only, came in a steady stream from her musicians, and compared well with similar works from the hands of foreign composers. A number of these found their way into Queen Elizabeth's "Virginal Book"; and if we are to believe the flatterers of her court, they received good interpretation at her hands.

Couperin, Lully and Rameau in France, and Scarlatti and Corelli in Italy, all produced charming suites, forerunners of those mighty ones that awaited the genius of Handel and Bach. Couperin came into the third generation of a family who for nearly two hundred years gave great musicians to the world. A denial, this, to the biologist's opinion that musical talent never survives three generations!

Of the dances themselves there remains much to be said, not only of those already mentioned; but of many others which further developments of the suite pressed into its service, either in place of, or in addition to the original four that followed the prelude.

The prelude itself in all the earlier suites was always of very indefinite character; so formless indeed as to convey the impression of a composer toying with his instrument, and undecided as to the particular manner in which he should voice his inspiration. In later developments of the suite, Bach raised the prelude to a higher level, giving it strength of form and real artistic value.

The allemande, already mentioned as following the prelude, in its very name bespeaks its German origin. It is a dance in common time, and gay in character in its first part, a second one following in which the feeling changes, and a grave melody replaces the livelier theme.

The courante is a dance in triple time described by some writers on old dances as being of a gliding character. The word, too, is supposed to have something to do with the naming of our country dance. Coranto is its Italian form, courante the French one; and the one used by Bach in his French suites for the harpsichord. It was in the early days of suite structure building, a dance of rather a running and nimble nature. Shakespeare makes Sir Toby speak of it as the dance which suggests hastening back to dinner, in distinction to the slower galliard, whose steps represent the graver walk to church.



Coming to the sarabande, we find a dance of stately character for its *motif*. But despite this stateliness, it seems to have been open to attack on the score of levity. It travelled to Spain with the Moors with many other Oriental dances, and in several of Cervante's writings is alluded to in terms of strongest condemnation.

The gigue has inspiration in its very name for all that is brisk and lively. The old suite writers gave to it generously of their irresponsible moods—those moods which come at times to the great, that their spirits may take flight to the realms that know no care.

There are many who are scared by the name of Bach. Let such have the chance of hearing the gigue of his D Minor Suite. In this, all that heaven can offer us in the way of child-like glee is voiced by the instruments which toss the glad themes one to another. Trumpets, strings, oboes and kettledrums—all draw us into this whirl of joyous melody and measure.

The bourrée and gavotte in the D minor Suite take the place of the courante and sarabande. The former has triple time for its measure, and starts on the last half of an up beat. Its music is always bright and uplifting. It is of the kind indeed that tempts the gravest to their feet.

Would have tempted Sophocles himself, perhaps, to the tip-toe mood. In those chapters of Grecian history that tell of her art, there is authority for this flippant remark; for the grave philosopher, we are assured, held the dance as sacred as any of the other arts protected by the muses.

The gavotte is of very old world origin. The Hautes Alpes are responsible for its steps. On its actual dancing side, its traditions are ancient enough to thrill the antiquary's soul. It is in common time, and a point of interest for the listener is to note how it starts on the third, or to use the real musical expression—the weak beat of the bar.

In addition to that in D Major, Bach wrote three other suites of admitted grandeur. In all of them one finds clearness of expression and strength of outline. The subjects are never obscure, although one is called upon to listen at one and the same time to a number of parts, as each instrument gives speech to its own.

All the early suites were written in the days when composers were content to offer their works under very simple titles. For the most part a number served to keep each separate from the other, though in some instances more distinctive names were attached to them. As an instance of

the latter method, we have handed down, from Edwardian days, volumes of dance movements called "The Book of Songs," or "The Book of Danes," as the case might be.

To-day, the suite, still a most popular musical form with composers, comes to us with titles on a much more elaborated principle. Titles which are suggestive of stories that we are asked to find in the music if we can. In some cases this can be accomplished successfully but in others the process is rather laborious. Music written in this vein is known as programme music, and it is on these lines that most orchestral works are now written.

In addition to the suite, they include the symphony—called more often the symphonic poem, the overture and the rhapsody.

The stories in their background are sometimes historical, sometimes legendary or mythological. And it may be added that one's imaginative faculty could be on very active duty in some instances to find the clue to them, were it not that our programmes told them at length.

In not a few of such scores, the musical subjects are meant to convey to our consciousness certain phenomena of nature. We have to find expressed in musical terms, such ideas as the moon rising over pallid mountain ranges, or the inrush

of seas round a barren rock. Torrents of cacaphony tell us of storms that lay giant forests low, and hurl boulders into raging waters. Nothing is considered too fanciful, too grave, too sensational for supplying an audience with mental pictures—pictures which formerly were only materialised for us in the representative arts of literature and painting.

It has been long an undecided point whether or no music unaided by the other arts can express material things; whether its power can go beyond arousing our emotions. It is a question the settling of which has a very far-off future. Meantime, composers arrange that our minds as listeners are directed to some definite narrative, instead of being left free to weave fancies of their own. Whatever the century, or the decade of a century, music-lovers will always be found who prefer their own imagination to be at the service of the score. For it is the mission of music to excite the imaginative faculty, a point not always remembered by musicians, but one they can never afford to overlook.

In another chapter some account will be given of the programme suite, overture and symphony. In this one, space is preserved for dealing with another musical work known as the serenata.

The serenata was a favourite musical structure during the eighteenth century. It may be considered under three forms, the vocal, the instrumental, the mixed vocal and instrumental.

The ordinary interpretation of the serenata or serenade is that of a love song accompanied by the lute, and sung by moonlight under my lady's balcony. This, however, is only one side of the serenata. To go back on its history is to find a concerted work which was not only sung and played out of doors, but also in the manner of chamber music.

In the days of its inception many private orchestras were owned by those in a position to afford them. But the number of instruments was confined to the requirements of a good-sized *salon*. This, of course, did not have the dimensions of a concert hall or opera house, and was consequently unsuitable for big instrumental works, such as the symphony or concerto. The position was met by the creation of the serenata as chamber music, an arrangement that soon brought charming compositions to its service. By degrees the vocal side of these gave place to the purely instrumental one, excellent players being engaged for their performance.

The serenata form is known as free. Its num-

ber of movements five to seven at the will of the composer. Their nature, too, was at his disposition; likewise the kind and number of instruments. One essential feature, however, was the march, or at least a subject written in the time of the march, and in something of the martial spirit.

Beethoven's two serenatas are noted works, known better to French music-lovers, perhaps, than English ones. The most famous is that written for three instruments, the violin, viola and violoncello. Its movements come in the order of the march, followed by an adagio, a minuetto, another adagio, a polonaise, andante and final allegro. The final allegro is sometimes replaced by the rondo.

The rondo of a serenata is a real nerve tonic in its airy playfulness. It is never boisterous, and always suggestive of the musicians being happy in its performance, and quite unconscious of any difficulties it presents. This observation applies in particular to the rondos written by Mozart, whose fancy so often turned to serenata composition.

The serenatas of Mozart have been the admiration of musicians ever since their creation. One especially signalled out is that in B minor, for

twelve wind instruments and a double bass. Another favourite with an audience was written for wind, strings, kettle-drums and two flutes. The slow movement of this has very tender feeling, but it suggests no unexplained sorrow, such as is found in the profound adagio of a symphony or concerto. The whole work is of consummate charm, with no striving after exaggerated effects. All is true to the serenata atmosphere, an atmosphere it shares with no other musical work.

In Haydn's time serenata playing in the streets at night was quite a usual custom. In his early life, too, when the next meal was of a visionary nature, he played the violin with other outdoor serenata performers. In this way a fee was secured which, though very modest, secured a night's lodging and a breakfast for the morrow.

The spirit of the serenata as revealed to us by the older composers is one of pure entertainment. All is peaceful and dainty in the quicker subjects, and the slower ones seem an invitation to restfulness unmixed with any suggestion of tragedy or unfathomable mystery. However much our affections may be turned towards the newer instrumental works, a place should be left in them for the serenatas written by Stradella, Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart. All of these offer us real re-

freshment of mind in an age that disposes us, perhaps, to read the future with over-apprehension.

Tchaïkovsky as serenata writer takes quite an important place. He brought very piquant effects to it in the lighter movements, very poetic feeling to those of slower character. Amongst the latter, too, one finds the elegy and in many of the sprightly finales, motives founded on folk-song. The orchestration in most instances is very sympathetic to the form, a feature not always found in that Russian composer's works.

Rubinstein has pleased many audiences with his serenatas, also Sir Sterndale Bennett, whose contribution to the form is in the vein so essentially his own. That of Brahms shows rather sterner setting, while into the lighter class again come those of Volkmann and Pierne.

All these should be heard when opportunity offers, as well as the serenata scores that come now and again from the pen of our modern English composers. The latter are often performed, and not a few of them have been written for orchestra and voices, an ensemble which never fails to please.

Debussy's "Serenata" has been likened to an opal in its subtle colouring. Colouring in its musical sense of harmony.



THE CONCERTO.



## THE CONCERTO.



THE difference between a concerto and a symphony is a very distinct one, although the orchestra employed for each may show great similarity, both in the number of its instruments and their character. For both musical works there will be tier above tier of first and second violins, of violas and violoncellos, and of mighty double basses, the pull of whose strings runs into tons. Of the great families of wood and wind, too, the drums in dumb solemnity presiding over all.

In the case of the concerto, however, there comes to the foreground of this array of sober wood and twinkling brass, the solo player who is to give out all the subjects written for the single instrument. It is the solo feature which marks out the concerto from the symphony. In the last-named, no prominence is given to any special instrument, save for occasional phrases, nor is there any place in it for virtuoso display.

But in drawing attention to this distinction, it must be made clear that in the earliest days of musical construction, the word concerto was a covering name for most works of ensemble character. At first it was confined to vocal compositions written in parts, and this for the reason that up to late in the sixteenth century no musicians wrote for instruments alone. In such compositions all was concerted, the vocal solo arriving much later, as the need for some kind of variation in musical forms made itself felt.

The change came first in Italy, where a musician wrote what was called a concerto da chiesa. As many as six voices were employed on its harmony side, another one being entrusted with what were considered at the time very fine solo subjects. Developments quickly followed, and score succeeded score in the new manner, and in the writing of which we find the names of Viadana, Caccini and Galileo. The last-named was father of the celebrated astronomer.

According to modern views there is not very much beyond recitative in the solo parts; in their own day, however, these were considered great achievements. But the recitative sort of feature was not the sole innovation brought to choral structures to give them relief. Another item was

that of some distinctive quartet, for the singing of which the best voices were specially trained apart from the other vocalists. Such quartets (in some instances trios and duets) came into the concerto in their appointed places, a fine musical form growing out of the arrangement, and one destined in time to give us both opera and oratorio.

Greater changes followed, for, as we have seen in another chapter, instrumental music about this period began to separate itself from the vocal. Little by little the former strengthened its position, it advanced quicker in one country than in another, perhaps, as opposition or encouragement was given to the new departure. In the musical schools great excitement and activity prevailed, the musicians of the day all eager to produce some work for instruments alone, that could take an honoured place. There were no aims as yet for solo instrumental works, all the activity was still in the direction of concerted music on the lines of the recognised concerto.

The earliest name in Italy associated with the instrumental concerto is that of Torelli, whose scoring for two violins and a bass string instrument excited wonder and admiration about the year 1680. Such a work would interest us to-day, and as old-world music is now brought more and

more to our concert-rooms by enterprising societies, Torelli's modest concerto may perhaps be programmed at no very distant future. Corelli and other Italians soon improved on Torelli's simple construction, and year by year their zeal was fruitful of works that showed an amazing insight into the nature of instrumental tonality.

As in the case of the vocal concerto, movements found their way into these scores that required more delicate rendering than could be given by a large number of performers. Such movements were reserved for the better-trained musicians, and were sometimes scored for two instruments, but more often for a trio or quartet. In quite a number of instances the quintet is found to have been a favourite feature of the scheme. There was no rule observed in this singling out of the solo instruments. Strings, wind, or wood were used together, or classed separately for the specially written ensemble.

The growth of the orchestra kept pace with that of its scores, and in Bach's time its number and variety of instruments was remarkable. In one of his (Brandenburg) concertos, a violin, piccolo, viola, two horns, three oboes and a flute were used for the tutti in addition to the instruments provided for the solo quartet. All six concertos, in-

deed, had scores written for them which show an orchestra of good size and variety at the composer's command.

The concerto became a truly noble form under Bach, who always made the solo instruments and the orchestra answer one another with beautiful subjects. He has left no works of this class which show the feeble device of the latter accompanying the former, nor is there any sense of patchwork in the welding of their themes. When all the instruments move together, a marvellous sense of orchestral exaltation is produced, the power of which is realised by even the so-called unmusical. A great favourite of to-day is Bach's Concerto No. 2, for violin, organ and strings. The first and last movements reach a veritable high-tide of joyousness. In the former, the solo violin enters at the twelfth bar of the gleeful strains, and engages in the interplay of parts, till its moment of silence arrives once more. Throughout the work the interest increases, and in no instance is any subject provided for the mere display of technical skill. The same concerto can be played with the clarinet as solo instrument.

Handel wrote some of his best music in concerto service. He left twelve beautiful works of the kind, each one of which is convincing that

the popular view of him as the monster chorus writer is in need of a little extension. His Concerto in C minor has charming tutti subjects, and his solo themes are equally captivating. The solo grouping in this is for two violins and a violoncello.

In Handel's time, it must be noted, there came many instrumental concertos from our English composers. Amongst their names are those of Stanley, Felton, Alcock and Dr. Arne. The musical critics of their day seem to have been rather indifferent to these works, for the concertos in question were described by them as mere copies of Handel. It was insisted that no originality entered into the scores.

Haydn wrote no fewer than fifteen concertos. They show great variety in his choice of solo instruments, and the delightful freshness and gaiety of the quicker subjects reveal some of Haydn's happiest moods. One of the number is written with the violoncello for its solo instrument.

Concertos are spoken of in the threefold sense of concerto da chiesa—the ecclesiastical concerto. The concerto grosso—a work for many instruments always in concert, and the concerto di camera.



This last is written for a solo instrument accompanied by orchestra.

Mozart in his concerto writing made a perfect blend of the dissimilar tones of a keyed instrument and orchestra. In listening to his piano-forte concertos it is easy to be convinced of his power in this direction. In all of them the flow of ideas is amazing, and in their strongest *forte* passages there is a richness suggestive of yet further strength in reserve. No instrument or group of instruments seems intent on making an audience feel the limit of its tonal power. These concertos were originally, of course, written for the harpsichord as solo instrument, a fact necessary for the modern pianist to keep in view in all the more delicate passages.

Beethoven's concertos, in the opinion of many musical critics, rank amongst the highest of his works. Their power to stir the imagination of an audience is immense. How easy, for instance, to weave all sorts of fancies for ourselves when listening to the C minor piano Concerto! At one moment the pianist, at the solo's close, appears to challenge the orchestra to say something finer, if it can, the position being reversed when the latter nears the end of its own special theme. In the pause between one movement and another, the very

air seems tense with questioning as to whether further beauties can yet be in store to captivate our senses.

In Beethoven's violin concerto, this dramatic touch of challenge and counter challenge is especially noticeable. In the final joyous movement the orchestra tries again and again to wrench the solo instrument away from its song of ecstasy to listen to some tale of human tragedy. But the violin throughout the finale retains its elf-like spirit, and always answers the instruments in the same dancing strain.

The cadenza, so marked a feature of a violin concerto, may be viewed as opportunity for a display of the soloist's power over technique. In quite early days it was often supplied by the virtuoso, and more often than not as an extempore performance. Composers, too, wrote cadenzas for one another's works, either voluntarily or by invitation. Beethoven, for instance, composed one for Mozart's B minor Concerto.

Mozart in his concerto scores often provides little more than a kind of musical chatter to the orchestra for an opening, into which the soloist hurries, as it were, with some brilliant excitable passage. Out of this, the principal subject flows with that graceful ease which tells its own tale of

genius at the fount. Mozart loved the rondo, too, for finale, and his partiality for cadenza must have been great, considering that thirty-two came from his hand. The flute was one of his favourite solo instruments in concerto writing.

Mendelssohn's violin concerto is perhaps amongst the best known of his numerous works. It shows his great love of singing melody, and in its first movement offers nothing that disturbs the listeners' calm of mind. This is, of course, a very usual feature in his compositions, and in this age of rather restless inspiration, it is sometimes refreshing to listen to his simple appeals. The slow subject is decidedly haunting, and is found by many critics to be too sentimental. The last movement shows the familiar Mendelssohn device of catch-me-if-you-can between violin and orchestra—just the little tripping idea common to the more sprightly movements in his chamber compositions, and such solo piano work as the once popular “Rondo Capriccioso.”

Schumann brings to his concerto inspirations some of his noblest aims in composition. As listeners, one is in the depths and on the heights in turn, but in his tumults of sound, he is the true artist who never makes his theme obscure, nor

leaves it waiting that secondary ideas may be exploited and tortured into exaggerated meanings.

Interest of many kinds gathers round Brahms's Second Pianoforte Concerto, in which he includes the musical feature of actual *obbligato* for the piano, while the other instruments give out the more important ideas of the movement. It is also curious to hear the horn as first to announce the subject in the opening allegro. The piano answers in the two following bars, only for the horn to repeat its question with the first three notes descending instead of ascending. This little flutter of two strains with these two particular instruments is very arresting, and makes an immediate bid for the listener's attention. There are five movements to this concerto, two more than the usual number of three.

Max Bruch as concerto writer is fairly popular with violinists of to-day. Both his violin concertos show a certain grandeur of conception, and though technical display enters largely into their composition, it is only when a subject gains by brilliant expression that such an expression is used.

Vieuxtemps, one of the greatest violinists of the century, and a Belgian by birth, wrote five violin concertos of some artistic value. Three cadenzas,

too, came from his pen for Beethoven's violin concerto. Though the display element in cadenzas must be admitted, there are emotions for the listener on hearing them "not otherwise to be revealed." The appeal is strong, perhaps, when an artist stands apart and wrestles with his instrument; demanding of it yet more torrents of sound, yet more complexities to be grappled with by brain and fingers in their fever of activity. The imagination of the listener can be strangely stirred by this contest between the bow and the artist, both of which seem struggling with some problem of infinity.

A great pleasure for many concert-lovers comes in listening to a violoncello concerto as one of Vieuxtemps's inspirations. That Sir Edward Elgar has also remembered the claims of this instrument in his concerto writing should make many of us grateful. Concerts we can sometimes hear in Belgium, perhaps, include in their programme violoncello concertos composed by that great Belgian 'cellist of the eighties, Francois Servais. It is well to remember that works often unheard in England await our hearing on foreign travel.

True to the Slavonic traditions in musical form, Rubinstein shows an almost unrestrained wildness in some of his piano concertos. In places one is

impressed by the obvious desire to show the virtuoso rather than the musician. For the listener there is often the feeling of a great tempest at an end when the work reaches its close. Of pity for the pianist, too, who has been called upon for an almost acrobatic display of muscular strength.

Other concerto writers of the Russian school are Tchaïkovsky and Scriabine. Considerable opposition by other musicians of his day was shown towards the former's treatment of concerto form. Despite the censures falling on his first piano one, however, it has taken its place in our programmes, charming many with the Russian folk-song features that come into its score.

That marvellous violinist, Ludwig Spohr, in his rôle of composer, turned naturally, perhaps, to the writing of concerto scores for the violin. He was only fifteen, indeed, when he played one of his own before a critical audience. The performance led to his obtaining an engagement in a ducal orchestra at a salary. When in this position other concertos quickly came from his pen. These are still valued, as works of charming invention and refinement.

Of Chopin as concerto writer an audience has nothing very remarkable to expect, for the development of a theme, that great essential in any

kind of orchestral work, was one of the powers wanting in this poetic composer of smaller works. There is no intimacy in his piano concertos—just two in number—between that instrument and the orchestra. Ideas for the former of no real magnitude are not much more than accompanied, and in themselves show no continuity—are mere phrases that lead to nothing in particular. The interest seems perpetually dropping, and the audience left with little to admire, save the player's skill in dealing with the difficulties of the piano-forte score.





A CHAPTER WHICH HELPS OTHER  
CHAPTERS.



## A CHAPTER WHICH HELPS OTHER CHAPTERS.



CHAPTER is now offered to our readers for supplying a little information in connection with those elements which go to the building of a musical work. The distinctions that exist between one tonal structure and another have their own chapters in our book, and if they are given an earlier position in it, it is for the reason that a reader can often be persuaded to go a little deeper into a subject after its more attractive side has been presented.

There are certain features in musical forms common to them all. In any concert audience taken at random, there will be listeners who are conversant with these features, who will have found time and opportunity to make their acquaintance in some musical treatise, or in intercourse with those whose rôle in life is to impart musical knowledge.

Time and opportunity of this description do not come to all, however, and there are not a few concert lovers who would be glad to get at the real meaning of a fugue, rondo and counterpoint; who do not wish mystery in the distinction between time, *tempo*, metre and rhythm.

Counterpoint as a study need scare no one who finds pleasure in listening to good music. It is a perfectly straightforward mental exercise, and to venture on it means much after-satisfaction in recognising the part such a device plays in any favourite work. Its need was bound to be felt as music cut its upward steps, for melody as mere unison could only fall out of favour on the score of monotony.

The monotony was first given relief by adding one higher or lower part to the sung melody. This added part was made up of notes which stood in good musical relationship to the refrain: their time values, too, were identical with those employed in the original vocal part. Thus, any simple tune built upon the principle of a semibreve to the bar would have its under or upper added part also composed of a semibreve to every bar. This modest venture in harmony is referred to rather alarmingly in musical treatises, as the first species of the contrapuntal system.

But after a time a sense of monotony on the part of musicians was again experienced, and a new device was resorted to, known as the second contrapuntal system. In this we find one time value—say that of a minim for explanation—for the melody, and two crotchets to the bar for the harmonising part. Yet further developments grew out of this device, bringing the third species of counterpoint. Ambition now soared higher, and scores were provided in which one semibreve in a bar did time duty for four crotchets for the melody and added part respectively.

The fourth species offers variety in an arrangement of one major time value for the melody bars and two smaller values for those of the added part. This latter moves in syncopated fashion, with the first note of each bar tied to its twin one of the preceding bar.

The fifth species shows a blend of all the others, and in its humble way provides a little interplay of vocalisation so far as interplay is possible in a score consisting of only two vocal parts. The melody, in early times called the *cantus firmus*, was always sustained by the tenor voice.

With counterpoint at its fifth stage of development it is easy to realise that it was well on its way to further elaborations, well on the road to

that four-part harmony which is the quintessence of musical sound.

The next stage was provided by a body of Flemish musicians whose history is as fascinating as any that literature affords. In this little work there can be but the scantiest allusion to their labours. Willaert is only one of the many names connected with this brilliant Belgian epoch in which harmony began to branch out into a four-part scheme, and to take its place in secular as well as ecclesiastical compositions. The same epoch in Flanders brought the use of the chromatic interval, an innovation introduced by Lassus, a musician whose spirit must have sponsored Chopin when weaving his fairy tangles of double sharps and flats.

Italy quickly took up this wonderful lead, and was not too proud indeed to seek Flemish help in extending her own system of counterpoint. From this fusion of schools developments grew apace, high ideals in musical art were reached, and the way prepared for the suite, for opera, oratorio, and all future forms of tonal expression.

A musical league of nations, too, was formed, for the liaison of Flanders and Italy was quickly followed by that of England, France and Germany, the musicians of each country vying with

one another to reach desired goals. To their help came the invention of musical printing, the art we owe to an Italian, himself a great musician. The labour—that really grand monastic one—of transcribing music note by note for multiplying copies of an original work, was now at an end. Printed scores could henceforth be freely interchanged, as each nation provided compositions in their new contrapuntal setting. This was no longer the tenor cantus firmus with a thin one-part support, but a four-part ensemble, with a treble voice carrying the melody.

Amongst these contributions was the madrigal, born, so to speak, in the lap of the League, and the creation of Willaert. England's industry in connection with this delightful vocal structure is well known, and her musicians were amongst the first to improve the rather crude harmonies in which it started on its course. Further mention of the madrigal is reserved for other chapters. We will now pass on to the fugue, which, for all the terror the name inspires, is one of the most playful devices that musicians have fashioned for the refreshment of our spirit.

Strange word this, refreshment, in such a connection; but a real examination of our sensations in the concert room is to find that listening to a

fugue which has the true ring of spontaneity, and none of the laboured drone of mediocrity, is exaltation for the listener, and not the boredom he has been led to expect from superficial musical chatter. The fugue is the composer's message on his sporting side, it is the musical expression of the chase. The huntsman loses the scent only to find it again in a transport known to himself and his pack. The listener loses the theme, only to find it bounding once more from its ambush of rhythms and keys. It is a dull spirit that can find no awakening in the fugue, whether its subtleties are woven for us by some glorious ensemble of wood, strings and wind, some mellowed choir of human voices, or by the swift fingers of the pianist in the final movement of his sonata.

The interweaving is, after all, so simple of comprehension. The first point for our mental grasp is that of a single part giving out the melody. In an orchestral fugue this "part" must be understood as belonging to a group of instruments of one particular quality and pitch. At a given point in its course, a second part chimes in with the same melody set in a key five notes higher, and known as the dominant. In its appointed time a third part introduces the melody in the original key, at an octave's interval to the first part's



pitch. The fourth part is the last incomer, the entry being made in the dominant at an octave's interval to the second entry's pitch. The ensemble being now complete, all move along together, providing a most subtle form of excitement for both audience and performers. The simple four-part fugue, however, is often added to by composers who delight in the interweaving of other parts with the original four.

Names great in fugue writing are those of Bach, Handel and Mozart. Handel's oratorios show his fugues at their greatest, Mozart making the device a truly wonderful feature of his symphonies.

Lengthy fugues often show what is known as the episode. One might call this its point of rest, as for the time being, the subject is either not heard at all, or, at most, very incompletely.

The rondo ranks as a kind of first cousin to the fugue. It is the oldest instrumental shaping of the musical idea, and has rolled like a snowball down the hill of time into the musical arena of to-day. A subject miniature in form made its nimble beginnings, so miniature, indeed, as to require but a few bars for its exposition. When the last bar was reached—its distance from the first was negligible—a return was made to the first one, only to result in the musical chatter starting all

over again. By degrees, second and third subjects came into the original scheme, and soon the old players of rondo had more to offer, and listeners more for their hearing.

The invention of the coda came as a godsend to the rondo, the to-and-fro character of which offered really weighty problems on the score of a satisfactory close. In itself the coda is a mere little musical passage skilfully welded on to any movement which, from the nature of its construction, could go on through the centuries. Equally with the rondo, the aria and its variations is very dependent on the coda, for variations of themselves suggest nothing in the nature of a perfect close. The ending of one seems always the signal for starting another, unless there is some decisive amen, so to speak, to bring the crotchets and quavers to rest.

The office of the coda being that of pure utility, has no attractions of its own to offer: Beethoven, however, though too good a craftsman to alter its character, managed to give it points not only of interest but of actual beauty tinged with expectancy. It is as though his parting words were: "Music never says farewell without the promise of return."

There is room to be puzzled over the various

expressions used in connection with the time values of music, but their explanation can be brief. Time is the breaking up of a bar into so many beats, having as its divisional factors breves, semibreves, minims, crotchets and their underlings, the quavers, semiquavers and demisemiquavers. Two time, common time, triple time, and six-eight time, all come to us on a very familiar footing.

*Tempo* has a different meaning. It is a word employed in connection with the rate at which any given movement is taken. There can be quick *tempo* and slow *tempo*, with many other subdivisions of the speed rate.

In dealing with metre we have the pleasurable task of showing the intimate relationship between musical and poetic form. If music were merely a matter of two-time, three-time, and their compounds, its powers of expression would be so limited, that not even its greatest composers could have brought it to the heights: its place in every age would have been the dead levels of monotony. Scansion is as necessary to its making as it is to the making of verse, and metre is music's scheme of the dactyl, the trochee, the iambic, the spondee and anapest. The composer, like the poet, knows which metre is best suited to his inspiration of the moment, and makes use of it accordingly. The

composer who ignores this need for scansion, who does not feel its necessity, is the one with whom we can dispense. As a summary of these remarks, the office of metre in music is to bring the notes into a system of accents, the nature of the accents being such as best expresses the feeling of a given composition.

Rhythm is the metrical grouping of bars quite distinct from metre, which is the metrical grouping and accenting of notes. It is to music what the grouping of its lines is to verse. It is a school-girl attitude, then, to think of time, *tempo*, metre and rhythm as synonymous terms. All stand for separate meanings, and to be clear about these meanings is to make the analytical programme lucid instead of obscure. It develops the listener's own critical faculty, too, and makes him a good judge of works and their performers, without waiting for the press to tell him what to admire and what to condemn.

THE FOLK-SONG CONCERT.



## THE FOLK-SONG CONCERT.



THE folk-song revival in our concert halls is one of the most noticeable of recent musical events. Its popularity has been quickly established, for though some features of its programme demand a certain amount of musical training to ensure appreciation, others offer that lilting type of melody which rarely fails in general appeal.

Folk-song research is fascinating, but it is a wide field to wander in. It belongs to all races of men, and to all the ages; linking the immediate present to a past dim to the vision of man. All the centuries add to this great human book of song, which expresses equally the most primitive emotions of mankind, and the more complex ones of advancing civilisation. In many stages of its development we can hear it from the platform, and in its rude form, little different to a howl, it can still be heard in the depths of a primeval forest. The initial struggles after musical form are being

echoed now from glens that as yet have not known the white man's tread; and these in their turn, step by step, will shape themselves into strains for the delight of an audience yet unborn.

These first struggles in Polynesia show a forest call that rises and falls with quite rhythmic precision. The same tendency can be found in other barbaric lands, such as the scarcely explored regions of South America. A later development of this war call is the repetition of three notes of distinct musical tone, in which an actual triple time beat is discernible. A byword here is that triple time is the first measure used by the human race when groping after musical expression.

From these attempts at tonality and time beats, the branching out of folk-song begins, notes being added almost singly to the simple three-note scheme, when handled by the next generation. In most countries there is the same tale to tell of slow melodic growth from this sketchy little strain of the woods and hills, till the stage of a definite air is reached. But notation—that is the use of symbols to guide the eye—shows itself a late chapter in folk lore, in which the early simple airs are handed down from father to son by memory alone. Instrumental support for the folk-song is invariably found to be a feature of later development—



one arriving some time after a people has mastered the art of musical intervals by vocal effort alone.

The passing of folk-song from unison singing to part-singing is a delightful chapter in the history of harmony; but it is a glorious tribute to the people's own special musical structure, that in many instances a system of harmony by slow and patient stages was worked out for it, apart from any help musical savants could have rendered it. In our concert rooms to-day, we hear folk-songs in rich harmonious settings, but there is fascination in the thought that many of them have at different periods relied for their interest not only on a thinner harmonisation, but on their melodic value alone.

There is much proof that the people's feeling for harmony grew out of a given melody, showing itself too high for some voices. On this discovery a rather barbaric harmony was produced by the lower voices singing the melody a third lower, note by note, to the higher voice part. This crude harmonising, however, by degrees gave place to one more agreeable to the ear, the art developing at a far greater rate in some countries than in others. The development differed in character, too, according to national temperament. The distinctions we

can learn for ourselves in our concert attendances. The folk-songs of one country show sad settings, those of another joyous ones, while those of a third will reveal a treatment of no extremes; modulations of the kind that leave us placid, and tuned to no emotions in particular.

In their form, as well as in their harmonies, folk-songs show very varied features. There is Basque folk-song, for instance, with its rambling tunes, so rambling, indeed, as to suggest mere improvising on the part of the singers. Heard in their own mountain fastnesses, the songs sound very weird; but they are free from that melancholy so often associated with music born in glens and ravines. The strains show a certain impulsiveness, are languorous and fiery in turn, suggest a people, in fact, that fanciful writers tell us carry a rosary in one hand and a dagger in the other! A people who throw off at a stroke any laws that war against their freedom.

The Spanish folk-songs also show a rambling tendency. In listening to them, too, there is the consciousness of phrases brought to sudden finish with a kind of jerk. The effect at times is that of the singers having received an unexpected command to suspend their lay. It is not difficult to realise that folk-songs of this kind provide very

little opportunity for harmonising, and can be better rendered in unison. The Spanish song-writing of to-day is carried out on very similar lines. The time beats are small, and scores in many instances are amazing in their prodigality of dotted notes.

The best songs are found in Andalusia, dreamy at one moment, fervid and passionate the next. They should be heard in our concert room accompanied by the kind of guitar that never seems to leave its Southern home.

The guitar's sonority is as caressing to the ear as velvet is to the touch. Another offshoot of the Spanish folk-song is the three-part one in which the two subordinate voices are not called upon to provide harmony enrichments in support of the treble; but to sing strains of different time and character, so skilfully designed as to make a blend of most fascinating character. As the Spanish music concert takes its place—though all too rarely—in turn with other concert season fixtures, it is well to be ready with the kind of knowledge that helps a listener to enjoy it.

The folk-songs of Italy are bright, and suggest the irresponsible moods of a people who we know have graver ones in reserve. In many of them, one detects a tendency to the Spanish sudden halt.

Those belonging to the extreme south show the curious device of allowing a distinctly emotional melody to slide into meaningless arpeggio, as though the composer suddenly wearied of his theme.

Neapolitan folk-song seems to be always in the making, and it stands to the credit of Italy that its humbler people are encouraged to develop their creative musical talent. Songs born of the people, year by year find publication, a proceeding that preserves folk-song as a living force, as well as a priceless relic of a bygone age. That the people's singing of their national airs in Italy is not always agreeable to the ear should not be overlooked, for there is the Neapolitan songster in whose veins courses more Arabian than Italian blood. This is the singer who introduces the Arabian quarter-tones into his strains, the effect of which is torture to our ears. This minstrel of the streets, who on English shores tries to coax pennies from our pockets, is quite outside the gifted ranks who still add chapters to their ancient books of song.

Hungarian folk-song might occupy a chapter to itself, so important is the place it occupies wherever music holds its court. In our concert halls it is brought to us in the form of Hungarian dances, gipsy songs and rhapsodies, with the

names of Brahms, Liszt and Dvorák as its chief apostles. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven frankly admitted its influences in some of their most important works, while to Schubert it was a constant source of inspiration.

Its special characteristics are naturally best discerned in the gipsy songs that London hears too seldom. They are fervid, their harmonies vivid, their melodies haunting, and of almost bewildering spontaneity. Were they shorn of words, they would still be vibrant with impassioned tales of a brave and restless race—a race that can bare its soul in the mystic speech of art.

English, Irish, Scotch and Welsh folk-songs are all of very antique origin, those of Wales the oldest of all. This country is indeed the store-house of songs sung to the harp before the Roman invasion. The harp itself is mentioned in the bardic songs as being of fabulous antiquity. Another wonderful feature of Welsh folk-songs is the early period at which harmony came into its structure. So far as records are able to prove, this harmonising never went through the raw early stages of counterpoint. It was the spontaneous growth of natural inspiration, something born in the heart of the people in the silence of their mountains. It is fitting that in a land where beautiful

voices are found in every century that nature should be ready with special musical gifts for her sons. Early in their history, so early, indeed, that sister nations were still content with the crudest of ditties, the Celts were skilled in the playing of the viol, the rote, cymbals and drum, their in-born talent leading them to fashion and play these instruments as accompaniment to their songs. The later Welsh songs are familiar to us; we love to hear them sung by rich Celtic voices. But our pleasure would also be great if those older folk-songs could come with frequency to our London and provincial concert programmes.

The collecting of our English folk-songs with students and musicians is pursued with considerable ardour, but as yet it is only a small proportion of concert lovers who have made acquaintance with them. Opinions in musical circles vary very much concerning their musical value, some critics looking for qualities perhaps that could scarcely attach to the folk-song of real British character.

It is in homely vein that the greater number of them have been written, many quite in the jaunty bucolic manner. Their love sentiment is easy, and unemotionally expressed in music and words. Through both peep the scenes of rustic wooing, with their faintly coloured background of valley,

hill and wood. It is for an audience to decide, perhaps, whether they gain or lose when presented to us in the concert room as instrumental solos elaborately scored. There will be some of us, for certain, who think they preserve their own atmosphere best if rendered in simple vocal forms.

It is interesting to reflect that the Scottish national ballads are the immediate outcome of the folk-songs born across the border. In particular, one feature of the older minstrelsy is often observed in the younger strains. This feature in common, is the tendency of the melody to reach the highest point in the middle of its eight-bar musical sentence. The effect of this particular ascension is very dramatic. Its power is magical, too, for lifting even commonplace melody to higher artistic levels, and investing it with a certain pathos that does not cease to haunt one when the concert room has been exchanged for the street. Even the earliest of Scotch folk-songs are on very defined melodic lines; free of the elaborations which give Italian ones their rambling characteristic.

In Irish folk-song we are again face to face with a great antiquity, for in the twelfth century melodies were coming into manuscript form that had been memorised for generations before, and sung

in castle and hut by wandering minstrels. Its early history, too, is interwoven with that of the bagpipe, played on Erin's shores even before it aroused the echoes amongst the Scottish hills. The wind of the Irish pipes, however, was supplied by bellows, and not by the mouth. Numbers of Ireland's ancient songs show the influence of the pipes' droning fifth, and the wailing character of these reveals another side of the Irish temperament to that exhibited by the national dances, which a peasant will laughingly tell one are older than the hills around him. If the folk-songs of Ireland do not find their way as yet to our concert rooms, that day is to come perhaps that will bring them to us. In the meantime, it would be a delightful feature of a summer holiday to hear them sung in their own land of legend and romance.

Northern Europe abounds in folk-song music. That of Norway was dear to the heart of Grieg, who in so many of his "*Lyrische Stücke*" has let us into the secret of their charm. Sweden's store shows her people's songs direct in their appeal, and with a marked devotion to the seventh, both as a melodic interval and as a ruling feature of their harmonic structure. The effect of this devotion, to use a hackneyed word, is weird; and the listener falls easily into the inexplicable sad mood



that touches our spirits on a summer's evening. There are buoyant melodies in the collection, it is true, but even in these the veil seems thin that is drawn between us and some phantom world of melancholy.

Finland some few seasons ago gave us the opportunity of hearing and being captivated by the folk-songs born in the land of a thousand lakes. They are songs of the forest and hills. There is the spring of the reindeer in one, the winter's sleep of nature in another. The moan of a dying warrior throbs in this rugged theme, the delicious whisper of love in some serener strain. Rugged and smooth by turn in their setting, they have gone through the usual folk-song stages of being sung straight off the reel of memory till advancing musical skill came to their assistance and notated them for the after-pleasure of men. A later epoch, too, brought accompaniment to their help in the shape of the kantele, an instrument that itself wears the crown of ages, and preserves the ancient atmosphere of the oldest of the lays.

It is one of our best modern musical ventures that Russian folk-songs are constantly brought to the hearing of an English audience. They come from a land that has much to tell, whose book of national life could have many of its chapters writ-

ten in ink of blood, even if others were written by an angel of light. In its songs are its history, however, and these so numerous and varied as to leave nothing unrecorded that lies at the heart of its sons. This may be said in particular of those from the Ukraine, in which part of Russia a people seems born age after age to a unique musical inheritance with a starting point no man can date.

On their musical side, there is a melodic firmness combined with a certain elasticity. Choice in the main has fallen on minor keys, in which even joyous lays make their start, working to major ones later in the score. They show, too, more so than many others, that folk-song characteristic of joining two contrasting subjects by one long drawn out suspension note. This is held sometimes by the tenor part, but more often by the treble, and in every instance the waiting leads to some new musical thrill. In one song a suspension note dies in exquisite softness, to be followed by some excited outburst, as a new verse tells of victory in love, or the wrestling of winds after noon-day calm. In another it ushers in luscious harmonies that need no words to help them tell some tale of human ecstasy. The changes of time, melody and key that await the suspension note's word of command, seem endless indeed, and their

artistic value such as to bear us far away from the prosaic scenes of the concert room.

To wander far afield again in our subject is to touch on the ancient songs of Egypt's peoples. At present they are for our hearing in Nature's concert room, whose roof is the blue of heaven, and its floor the burning sand—its walls the lines of distant caravans, and horizons barred with the opal of coming dawn or the glow of departing day. Egypt's folk songs resemble those of other lands in their power to present many ages to our minds, but they please or distress the ear as it can accept or not the splitting of one musical tone into three. It is suggested that some modern French composers have found in these songs of the East the model of their own new tonal methods.

German folk-song, beyond the mention that it came from quite early times, shows very defined musical form, will receive no further treatment in this chapter, for the reason that references will be made to it in that bearing on oratorio.

The folk-song revival in our concert halls is one of the most noticeable of recent musical events. Its popularity has been quickly established, for it comes as a novelty, although its antiquity is of the greatest. Some are acquainted with its his-

tory and attend the concerts because of their old-world interest, others are drawn as audience for the reason that the refrains are pleasing, and promise but few complexities to the untrained musical ear.

THE ORCHESTRAL PROGRAMME  
MUSIC CONCERT.



## THE ORCHESTRAL PROGRAMME MUSIC CONCERT.



PROGRAMME music, as has already been explained in a previous chapter, is music which has narrative of some sort for its background—narrative that is historical, mythological, or legendary, according to a composer's choice. On its orchestral side it comes to us in the form of suite, overture, symphony and rhapsody.

A suite of this narrative character, by Grieg, is one very familiar to a concert audience. The "Peer Gynt" suite comes into our home life music, too, in duet form, the form in which it was originally written. It is not often that four-handed compositions for the piano are converted into orchestral works, but this is a case in point. The step was taken by Grieg himself, and can be looked upon as justified, for in its instrumental dress the suite is very telling, and well fitted to press the claims of the programme music device. It will

never take its place as a classic, but as an item of the lighter type of concert music it will hold its own for many decades to come. In all the numbers there is something to please, something to hold the attention, something to carry away.

"Ase's Death" is one of its strongest items. In this we certainly hear the sobbing of the peasant woman's friends, and the steady foot tread of the funeral procession. "Anitra's Dance," too, brings a vivid picture of the Arabian girl's gliding steps. We can feel her mocking spirit that both frightened and fascinated Peer Gynt when he posed before her as the Prophet.

It is the few, rather than the many, perhaps, who have read Ibsen's poem, and thus made acquaintance with the various incidents round which Grieg's music has been written.

The programme suite under Debussy's hand shows the composer's love of sea pictures for musical expression. In his modulations there is plenty of opportunity for the listeners to imagine changeful colour on the waters—to hear the ocean's restless voice in phrases on the true Debussy model.

Bizet and Massenet are two other French composers of the modern suite. But a work by the former now heard in suite form was originally written as incidental music to Daudet's drama,



"L'Arlésienne." The whole composition is very charming, very vitalised, and very original. Quite a number of delightful picture suites came from the pen of Massenet, most of which can be heard at any of the good concerts in their native land.

As a byword at this point, it is a charming feature of French provincial town life, that music of this character can be heard in the open air played by an excellent orchestra. A still more charming feature, perhaps, is the way in which these concerts are enjoyed by all classes. It is an experience of the writer to have heard the above composer's suites compared by women of the working class.

Many suites do not go beyond presenting us with an idea, which the titles furnish. "The Wand of Youth" comes into this list; "L'Enfant Prodigue," "Polish Suite," and any others that just bear a national name. In these last we are just meant to get some country's atmosphere from hearing the score, to find for ourselves picturesque features attaching to foreign lands.

Dvorák brings Slavonic dances to the concert room in his suites. In one there will be the furious, the dance which starts in happy mood, and grows in liveliness till the point of frenzy is reached by the dancer and the music. Folk-song

motives also makes this composer's suite subjects, and the Dumka, a national strain of mournful character. In a Dumka subject, indeed, one seems to hear the sorrows of the world.

Tchaïkovsky's suites abound in dance pictures of Russian character. They differ from the dance suites of classical form, as they are meant to conjure up actual dancing scenes with a certain amount of other incidents suggestive of Russian festive life.

Folk-songs are frequently worked up into the programme suite form. Those of Piedmont can be listened to in a suite by Sinigaglia. Works of this order are programme in character, for the reason that we are meant to find the subjects of the songs in the instrumental score; to realise all that their verses would tell the audience, were the singers present to voice them.

To go back on the dance suite, the Russian composer, Rimsky-Korsakov, has brought out the Oriental dance atmosphere with great intensity. To listen to this in the concert room, even where it is shorn of its ballet effects, is to feel caught up in a whirlwind of desire to join in the lightning steps.

From most of the Russian composers—a list which includes Balakirev, Borodin, Glazounov,

Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rubinstein and Rachmaninov—programme music has come as in a stream. To some there is the background of war histories and incidents, to others that of national scenes, such as village fêtes, and the more solemn rites of Church and State. There is a power in all these works every concert audience knows.

Schumann's connection with programme music is emphasised in many directions. It is revealed in his smaller solo works, quite as much as in those written for orchestra. It is with the latter we shall deal in this chapter.

Taking "Manfred" as the composer's most representative work in this class of music, Schumann's score is considered to show less desire to put before an audience the special incidents of Byron's poem, than to make it realise the gigantic force of Manfred's magic-loving nature.

It is easy for a listener to feel this force in the wild theme, the veritable tumult of sound that the instruments let loose at points. In none of the themes, however, is cacophony employed; that feeble device of inferior composers for heightening tonal excitement. Schumann never degraded his art in programme music; never brought exaggerations to it that not only offend, but defeat the end in view.

"Manfred" is in overture form, which it must be remembered is a favourite form with composers, quite apart from its operatic connections, for obtaining certain orchestral effects. Schumann's inner musical spirit is beautifully expressed by its means, though his concert overture, "The Bride of Messina," it must be added, rather fails to suggest the passion of its story.

It may at this point be explained that the overture form lends itself to very varied treatment. The border line between one kind and another is not very distinguishable. Sometimes it is a mere medley of melodies borrowed from the opera to which it acts as a prelude, but even for this office it frequently offers quite independent themes. The number of movements is generally two, with no break in between them, the second gliding back into the first at a certain point in its motive. The so-called concert overture is a composition quite unattached to any opera, and to this order the programme overture belongs. In its earlier days, this detached kind of overture was rather light in character. With increasing age, however, it is asked to express more, as we easily realise when listening to any of those which come into ultra-modern programmes.

Beethoven's overtures, played as often at the

classical as at the lighter type of concert, can be viewed as programme music, including those intended as introduction to opera. Both the "Fidelio" and "Leonora" overtures come into this category. Some of them, by desire of a poet or a librettist, were composed to provide incidental music to poems and masques. "Prometheus" was scored for a ballet of that nature, and "Egmont" to make the musical background to Goethe's tragic poem.

Another overture that lives apart from its opera on the lines of incidental programme music, is Schubert's "Rosamunde"; and in company with it most of Weber's overtures. In England Weber's operas have fallen into disuse, but as their plots are associated with their overtures, the latter can easily be classed and enjoyed as programme music. The list is a fairly long one, and includes "Eury-anthe," "Der Freischütz," and the dainty, tripping "Abu Hassan." All the "Preciosa" themes, being just incidental music to a plot of gipsy interest, can be similarly placed.

Just what its title suggests is the "Tragic" overture of Brahms. The programme idea is not heavily accented in this, nor is it in many of Mendelssohn's overtures. The "Midsummer Night's Dream," however, is vivid as programme music,

and tells the story of fairy frolic almost as well as Shakespeare himself.

Dvorák, in his three overtures of the programme type, asks the orchestra to speak of nature—life—and love. The first is to express in musical sounds the quiet of meadow and wood at eve, the second the revelries of carnival, the third, love on its tempestuous side.

The Italian composers, for the most part, have kept their overtures more on the lines of introductions to their operas. Some of Rossini's, perhaps, show something of the programme atmosphere, "William Tell" in particular. This is of a decidedly pictorial character, for its pretty pastoral pipe movement can always transport its listener to the snowy peaks of Switzerland. The opening subject, too, lays bare the father's anxious heart.

In their turn most of our English composers find the programme overture a suitable setting for their inspirations of pictorial or dramatic character. Their names would provide a longer list than it is in our power to give. But it includes those written by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Sterndale Bennett, Sir Edward Elgar, of Cowen, Sullivan, Bantock, Bridge, Tomlinson, Holbrooke, Harford Lloyd and Vaughan Williams.

The programme type of symphony has taken to

itself more or less the name of symphonic poem. Two favourite works of this character are by César Franck, called "*Les Elroides*." One of these shows a dreamy musical setting to a nature poem, the other tells us through the orchestra of a fiery call to the chase. The poem itself which inspires the score makes terrible tragedy a note of the chase, which it is the composer's intention an audience shall find in his symphony.

Lalo, a writer in most of the programme forms, finds subject in Spanish folk-song for his effects. The word Spanish, however, has a wide interpretation, for different provinces of the Peninsula show songs and dances of very varied character. Lalo likes for his gipsy musical pictures, strains in the minor key; those of the sensuous tenderness that show a Moorish origin. For contrasts he turns to more florid melodies, many of which, in the true Spanish manner, start with a rapid downward scale. An audience must be of the insensitive kind which does not take pleasure in listening to Lalo's programme music, the rich colouring of which never obscures the outline of his themes. His "*Symphonic Espagnol*" is a most attractive work.

The Finnish composer, Sibelius, often shows great gravity in his programme subjects. His in-

struments are given severely mournful themes, meant (so it is understood by many) to suggest the heavy hand of the oppressor on his country. Many are written to illustrate the poems and legends of his northern land, and in these the music is of very rousing character. He has great feeling for contrast, too, which remark tempts the further one that powerful contrast is an absolute essential to programme music if its appeal is to be assured.

Scriabine is one of the Russian composers who seems to revel in the programme music form. Presumably it provides him with the right sort of setting for his most excitable moods. His "Poem of Ecstasy" generally arouses the enthusiasm of his listeners, but it is not every audience that can appreciate the rather pronounced jangle of his harmonies. There are magical moments in all his programme scores, but despite their flash-like brilliancy, there is often the atmosphere of cold steel in the background, suggesting that contrast can be rather overdone.

The orchestral rhapsody rarely fails to carry us along in its own stream of sound. Its message is exceedingly clear. It is programme music of a nature that needs no story behind it to make us feel the swim of great emotions. Its score is enough, and the pull of its rhythm of the kind



that makes us drop our sullen moods. Liszt and Dvorák are pre-eminently the writers of rhapsody. It is for them no exotic form. To-day we see English composers tempted to it, and the Welsh, Irish and Scotch Rhapsodies written by Edward German, Stanford and Mackenzie come often enough into our programmes for us to judge of their merits.



THE STRING RECITAL.



## THE STRING RECITAL.



THE string recital, particularly on its violin side, rarely fails to attract, and for its programme, works not only beautiful, but of highly varied interest, exist in abundance. A little review of these compositions will, on their older side, show the names we have already found associated with so many classical forms.

Corelli as a name to start with wrote four sonatas for the violin, in the playing of which he ranked as a virtuoso of his day.

Sonatas beloved of every violinist worthy of the name, too, are those of Mozart, Beethoven, Tartini, Schumann, and countless other composers of the older French, Italian and German schools. A booklet, not a chapter, would be necessary for providing the reader with a representative list of these wonderful works.

It is in the sonatas of the older schools—in which we may include those of Brahms—that we

find the violin as duet instrument with the piano, and no mere solo one, with a piano part as accompaniment. Just as both hands in a piano sonata have an equal share in its interpretation, so do piano and violin in works that belong to the great sonata epoch. This distinction establishes itself very firmly in a listener's mind after a few attendances at violin recitals, the programme of which often offer sonatas both of the old and newer type.

All violinists, perhaps, revel in the playing of Tartini's great classic, in which the slow movement that precedes the immortal "Trillo del Diavolo" is tragic as any lines in Browning's "Sordello" or "Ring of the Book." If, as the fantastic legend tells us, a demon was joint, if not principal, composer of the "Trillo," a thousand smaller ones seem to lend a hand in loosing the torrent of notes from their strings, as one listens to the onward rush of arpeggios, shakes and trills. From Paganini, too, there are sonatas to tax the violin virtuoso, and to present him with passages in which magic might have had a hand in fashioning the score.

In listening to the works of these two composers there is the usual point in character forming to think about in their connection that we find inseparable from the biographies of other great

musicians. Tartini can add his poverty chapters to these tragic chronicles, and Paganini stirring pages of his prison days, when debt made a felon of genius. What character sketch can compare with that of men toiling in hunger at scores destined to electrify audiences for centuries to come?

Paganini was all the more wonderful as a player, as he could never be found in actual practice. A new and colossally difficult work would be brought from the publishers, but, as an eyewitness wrote, only to find him look intently at the score, make a few measurements on his instrument with his long fingers, then to lay it carefully back in its place. The strings never spoke, no sound intruded on the silence of his bare little room.

Tales of the composers are mostly heroic tales. To read them in the concert room, is to enhance its atmosphere, to make us find therein not only delight for our senses, but strength for high endeavour.

Another favourite classic for the violin recital is Bach's "Chaconne," a name of no particular meaning for many who make its audience. But in the "Chaconne" we are shown once again the attraction of old dance movements for great com-

posers. This particular dance is of Moorish origin. Its musical form is a ground bass melody sixteen bars in length. One can be almost wildly fascinated by this effect of a melody interwoven, as it is, with all sorts of musical devices on the other strings, and the whole produced by one bow and its player. It could easily be fancied at points that several string instruments were engaged in its performance, and the work naturally makes great claims on a violinist's technique. Only that artist can please who renders it with ease, however; who can make it sing upon his strings with perfect abandon. Its spell over us vanishes the moment in which we are allowed to feel its difficulties.

The violin works of more recent days brought us Grieg's three sonatas. There is a tinge of melancholy at times in these; not the melancholy we know when great trouble wrings the heart, but that which comes to us when gazing into infinity across great spaces of land or sea. They are bright in their quick movements when bowed lightly in their own spirit, and their varying harmonies seem to paint for us the ever-changing hues of a sunlit lake.

César Franck, in his violin sonatas, says many delightful things, also Dohnányi, and every



season gives us the opportunity of hearing other moderns, including those of our own country, add to a form which Corelli deemed an ideal one for strings to interpret. The old English sonatas include one by Purcell, who wrote it for three violins, a work that may yet again make itself heard on our concert platforms.

No work of small dimensions could possibly mention the endless list of works which come into a violin recital. New ones come to us under old names, and under the more romantic titles that find favour in these modern times. Some of them please, some are written with a strange disregard for the violin's tonal quality. Compositions that give a violin the timbre of an inferior flute, and which tear at its tone, stand for an audience to get dismissal from our programmes. Too often the dazzling effects obtained from this kind of music tempts an audience to a frenzy of applause. And this for the reason that it has lost its head in a tumult of sensations which it takes for musical ones; but which in reality are akin to those produced by an acrobatic star display.

A violoncello recital is one of the supreme joys of the concert room. Music has been, and continues to be written in abundance for this instru-

ment, but in many of these scores there is not the right instinct for its limitations.

It is superlatively the instrument of mystery and pathos; and it is in this character that Beethoven presents it to us in his violoncello sonatas. In these there are slow movements for proving its sonority, and the lighter subjects never invite it to play pranks with the upper strings.

Many composers bent on providing the violoncello with display concert pieces, would do well to study these sonatas, in which there is much delicate work for the bow; but none of that overflorid kind which breaks tone, and robs the instrument of its resonance.

An ideal composition for the violoncello, and one often included by artists in their recital programmes, is a Larghetto by Mozart. Every audience shows its appreciation of this work. The Belgian school of composers, too, offers many delightful scores in similar vein.

Brahms has given some of his best sonata writing to the service of the violoncello; and although there is difficult work for the bow in some of the subjects, none of it is of a character that makes for brittle tone or scratchy effects.

The admirer of Debussy's music should watch the concert notices for that composer's violoncello

sonata. As a rule, it is either great enthusiasm that is shown for this French writer's works, or dislike rather pronounced in character. But when such extremes of opinion prevail, there is often only a limited knowledge of a composer's creations as a whole.

A little advice on this point, is to make acquaintance, wherever possible, with as many classes of works as have been contributed to by composers of whatever school and period. The first hearing of the Debussy violoncello sonata may or may not satisfy; but the experiment should be made, as new experiences are good in the musical as well as in other departments of life.

English composers provide many scores for the violoncellist, many of which an audience finds eminently suited to the instrument that, as a nation, we greatly admire. Not the least amongst the pleasures of our concert rooms, it may be added here, perhaps, is the superb playing that the violoncello receives at our countrymen and our countrywomen's hands.

Gradually the viola is taking its place in the string recital. Why we do not oftener hear this instrument, and why its merits as a solo instrument were so overlooked by the old composers is amongst the things not understood. Its tone is

low and vibrant—one to feel, rather than hear. There is mystery in its strings—something of that mystery we know when the nightingale's note steals from the glade. Schumann wrote for it, and it was an instrument almost bound to appeal to the writer of the Romance in F and the "Abendlied." Both these thrilling compositions might be brought into recitals in a setting adapted to the viola as is "Traümerei" for the violin.

Modern composers are recognising it, though slowly, as worth their attention, with women in their ranks. A suite for the viola and piano is amongst their works, to listen to which is convincing that the timbre of the viola and the piano make an excellent ensemble. The union of a keyed instrument and a string one is not always a happy one, especially when the pianist is out for display; a manœuvre that should never fail to be coldly received by a recital audience.

It is in this chapter that the distinctions between tone, timbre and pitch may be made clear; for the press of daily life often compels a concert-loving public to remain in ignorance of the meaning of many musical terms, these amongst their number.

Tone is a property common to all instruments, the construction of which enables them to give a musical value to sound. All bodies when struck

cause vibrations which reach the ear as sound ; but whereas a block of wood on receiving a blow will give us merely the sensation of noise, the same block converted into a violin will provide us with a musical sound, commonly known as tone. To carry the explanation a little farther, the musical instrument conveys its impulses to the ear by a continuous and regular series of vibrations. Wood, brass, string, keyed and percussion instruments, are all brought into line with this unalterable law of acoustics which singers unconsciously obey. Nature in their case takes the place of the instrument makers' art.

It is quite common knowledge of the concert room that some instruments possess a purer and richer tone than others of their kind. But behind this lie such questions as quality of wood, slight differences of form, and many others equally complex. To make them clear could hardly be expected in a work of this description.

But we also hear, or read, of certain players having a good or a pure tone. Here we are face to face with mystery—the magic of touch, that gift of the gods. The power of drawing fine tone from his instrument belongs to the artist. No system can bring it to his fingers; no professor, though all the letters of the alphabet follow his

name, and a teacher's certificate stares from his studio walls.

Tone on its quality side is a super power in music. A fine-toned orchestra will bring us strange tremors in a concert room, while that of poor sonority will leave us cold and unimpassioned, whatever the merits of its score. The drum in particular is dependent on the player with feeling for good tonality. Under his touch it is the instrument of Beethoven's dreams, vibrant with forebodings, fruitful of those tremulous sounds that fill us with awe. When this artist touch is lacking, the drum's right place is the circus tent, where cheers await its vulgar clang.

In its connection with singing, too, tone reigns all supreme. It was, for instance, the fusion of exquisite vocal tones that enthralled us when the Russian opera chorus held the English stage. And it was the quality, not the power, of Chaliapin's voice that put his audience under a spell; that made it incapable of noisy applause when his singing drew to a close. There are not a few of us who can recall that moment when the curtain fell in silence—a silence as breathless as that of nature, when waiting for the flash that ushers in the thunder's roll.

No better proof is needed than this bygone ex-

perience that an audience can feel the power of tone, and can appreciate in their concert attendances the conductor who has instinct for sonority.

This indeed is the very touchstone of the conductor's art. When it exists we are given rich volumes of sound from the orchestra. Where it does not, we have a mere blare from the instruments under a frenzied baton. The will of an audience can always prevail. Let our readers then take an interest in retaining for our concert rooms the conductor who never exaggerates tone, nor provides finales that bombard our ears like the cheers of a holiday crowd.

The question of tone could well claim a chapter to itself, but it must give place at this point to a brief explanation of timbre.

Timbre is the special quality of sound attaching to various classes of instruments. There is a special timbre for the organ and one of quite another character for the piano. It makes the distinction between wind instruments and strings, between those of wood and parchment, such as drums, bagpipes, tambourines and guitars.

The subdivisions are almost countless. Amongst the brass there is one timbre for the cornet, another for the horn. Sounds are quite individual too that come from an oboe or clarinet

where wood is concerned. And to turn to the strings how great the difference between a violin and double bass. No listener could make any mistake between one instrument and the other. On its vocal side there is the question of timbre for treble, alto, tenor and bass.

The gramophone too has its timbre. However much this contrivance claims to reproduce the notes of special instruments and voices, its timbre is entirely its own; it pleases or offends as the listener can accept its own special offering to musical sounds.

Pitch is the level in the musical range of sounds at which any note confides its vibrations to the air. The note C can be played or sung as the third space of the treble clef, or that of the second in the bass. It is the note C in both instances, but the effect upon the ear is very different. The difference is caused by the number of vibrations produced by the striking or singing of the notes in question. There are fewer vibrations for lower tones than high ones. In the case of these two C's for instance, there are more than two hundred separate impulses for the one than the other.

The numerical study lying behind this question of musical vibrations can be very fascinating for those who have time to pursue it.



THE CHAPTER ON ORATORIO.



## THE CHAPTER ON ORATORIO.



BEGINNING with the days of the great Handel himself, the English nation has given whole-hearted devotion to the oratorio. An audience for "Elijah" and "The Messiah," indeed, can be counted upon, whatever the state of the national purse, and however warm, for the moment, the battle that forever wages round the accepted and the experimental tonalities.

But if the oratorio can command its thousands of enthusiasts, it is the few rather than the many who have time and opportunity to study its history—to make it stand for something more to them than a musical structure linked up with the names of St. Philip Neri, Handel, Mendelssohn and Bach.

To go back on its history is to find oratorio moulded by many hands in many ages, England herself being first in the field with a system of psalmody which paved the way to the music of oratorio's essential features. By 1280 Britain had

the lead of other nations in giving a real musical value to the ecclesiastical chants, in changing their monotonous unison to a scheme of solos, chorales and choruses—a scheme familiar to us in any oratorio score.

For quite a considerable period the fashioning of opera and oratorio went on side by side. The same Italian composers and librettists offered their services for each in turn. For both works similar methods of construction were employed, similar musical values, all differences resting with the nature of the plot, which was founded on a sacred or secular story as occasion demanded. It is the names great in opera writing which stand for memorising in the creating of oratorio, the list including those of Caccini, Peri, Cavalieri, and, at a later stage of its development, those of Scarlatti and Carrissimi. It is scarcely necessary to remind our readers that all these came prominently into our chapter *re* "The Making of Opera."

A very interesting point in the study of oratorio is the threefold character in which it has appeared in different ages and under different composers. In musical histories the three types are described as dramatic, narrative and didactic. The first type justified its name by having certain portions performed on the lines of actual drama, the

singers acting as well as singing their parts. Choruses were employed to connect the action of the drama, and to voice emotions sympathetic to the sacred story which provided the plot.

To the narrative class belongs that long list of "Passions" which gradually led the way to Bach's great masterpiece. In all these earlier works there can be traced a close connection with the ritual observed in the Holy Week services of the mediæval church—a ritual which arranged for the Passion to be chanted by many cantors, instead of intoned by one officiating priest. Only a few steps were needed to convert what was already a scheme of solos, chorales and choruses into a definite musical work, a work which could stand apart from any service of the church. In quite the earliest Passion oratorios the words of the Liturgy were retained. With time, however, there came libretti, which gave the story of the Passion more suited to the musical developments.

Bach's Passion music, for reasons unexplained, is not called oratorio, though it is written to suit the latter's blended character. Its music reaches the very pinnacle of religious feeling. The music and the words in every subject seem almost in rivalry to express the soul's contrition; its deepest reverence, its exalted sense of the great mystery of

redemption. It is one of the best signs of the times that the opportunity is so often given us of listening to this sublime creation.

The didactic oratorio admitted of short pious addresses between the vocal parts, so many of which were arranged for congregational singing. The actual dividing lines between the different kinds of oratorio became fainter in the sixteenth century, a blend being effected which led to oratorio in the form which inspired Handel and his successors. St. Philip Neri did much to bring about the connection, his activities in this direction being doubtless responsible for the tradition that he was the actual creator of the oratorio. This tradition gathered force for the reason that the hall in which the saint produced these works for the edification of Roman youths was known as the Oratory. Much of the old miracle play character came into the oratorios staged and directed by this ardent apostle of youth, dancing even providing one of the features.

It was at this stage of its development that Palestrina devoted some of his finest inspirations to the oratorio, the orchestral side of which was becoming more and more important, both on the score of added instruments and increasing harmonic enrichments. For the first oratorio, as for

the first opera, the orchestra was limited to about six instruments, and these but of thin tonal value. No hurricane of sound awed the listeners in those early days as it does now when Handel's mighty choruses, supported by countless instruments, reverberate in our Albert Hall and buildings of similar immensity.

Handel, so strongly associated in our country with oratorio, came nevertheless to London as an opera writer. It was only when competing with Italian operatic writers had brought him to ruin that he turned to those creations that thrill vast audiences at every Handel Festival. Broken in spirit, as well as in health, for awhile, on recovery he gave to the world in twenty years more than twenty oratorios—the first, “Alexander's Feast,” being considered one of his noblest works. Not all of the twenty, however, have stood the test of time. Almost all require an entire evening for their performance. As a further remark, many, save in their choruses and chorales, exhibit an over-elaboration that Handel himself disapproved. Arias, not a few, are overloaded with roulades, largely written to satisfy some of the leading singers of his day.

For generations now it has been decided that the pearls of Handel's oratorios are “The Mes-

siah," "Judas Maccabæus," "Samson," "Alexander's Feast" and "Israel in Egypt." Every Handel Festival finds listeners captivated by that solo, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and by "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." The arias, too, "Behold and see," and "He was despised," rend the heart, bringing the Redemption home to us in all its deeper meaning. The "Hallelujah Chorus," with its joyous message, is ever popular, but many other of Handel's choruses are merely massive, unsupported by the finer creative instincts.

Haydn's oratorios rank high amongst his works, there being much sublime and tender feeling in "The Creation" and "The Seasons." As in his masses and other sacred music, there is a general atmosphere of glad Hosannas—of the composer's belief in joy as one of Heaven's gifts, vouchsafed to those on earth. From Mozart's prolific genius we have fine Passion music, seldom heard, alas!, the same remark applying to Beethoven's "Mount of Olives."

The real oratorio lover, perhaps, will never join the ranks of those who find Mendelssohn's music too obvious, too melodious, too barren of those elements needful, at points, to express what is discordant in life and life's activities. It is not



necessary, however, to follow any one lead in musical opinion, which is this to-day, only to become that to-morrow. The open mind in music is for us all, and there must be many who turn with relief from the bewilderment of modern music to the serene chorales and the soaring solos found in "Elijah" and "St. Paul," the strains, too, in the "Lauda Sion," so strong in their simplicity. Mendelssohn's gauge of the limitations, as well as the possibilities, of the human voice, must always commend admiration. It stands in strong contrast to the ultra-modern methods, whose aim might be that of so forcing vocal tone as to rob it of all real musical tonality.

Foreign composers of oratorio, nearer to our own time, include Spohr and Rossini; the former famous as writer of "The Last Judgment," the latter as composer of "Moses in Egypt." Nearer again, come Hiller, Gounod, Dvorák, Brahms and Rubinstein. It was a compliment to England that Dvorák's oratorio, "Saint Ludmilla," was written for a Leeds Musical Festival.

England's share in oratorio writing is by no means small. To dip into an earlier century is to find five such works down to Dr. Arnold's name, and two to that of Dr. Arne, one of which is the celebrated "Judith." To Macfarren we owe

"John the Baptist"; to Sir Sterndale Bennett "The Woman of Samaria." Sullivan bequeathed to us "The Golden Legend"; our own immediate age giving us Sir Edward Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius." For hearing this last of our list, opportunities come not only often, but in many localities. Few works of recent years have attracted more attention than this wonderful setting of Cardinal Newman's mystic poem.

Amongst the musical writers of various nationalities there are not a few who ask us to trace a connection between German folk-song and the chorales that enter into the oratorios and cantatas of Mendelssohn and Bach. But, concerning these folk-songs themselves, it is possible to form very imperfect opinions, as many of the twelfth century *lieder* are mistaken for the songs of a far remoter past.

The former had their beginning in that romantic period when the troubadours of Provence were enriching music with chansons sung to the lute, and in their later developments quite possibly served as a working model for an after-generation of chorale writers.

But for quite a long time the real folk-songs and the newer *lieder* were sung simultaneously by the German wandering minstrels known as

minnesingers; for while strolling musicians from the southern provinces voiced the newer strains, those of central Germany clung to the unscored lays of a simpler people and age.

The whole subject is full of interest for those who have time for its study; so far as our remarks are concerned, however, they must come to a close, for another chapter now claims our readers' attention.



A CHAPTER ON RUSSIAN OPERA.



## A CHAPTER ON RUSSIAN OPERA.



RUSSIAN opera is entitled to consideration apart from other opera, perhaps, for it presents us with many points of individual interest, many characteristics which have no counterpart in the music drama of other countries.

Its history shows no real antiquity, and crosses none of those chapters which relate the struggles of Peri and Scarlatti, or the triumphs of Lully and Gluck. It starts little earlier than 1735, the period when opera, owing to the labours of Italy, France and Germany, stood to the musical world as a well-developed structure, and ready for its distinctive titles of bouffa, comic, serio-comic, romantic and grand. Russian opera, when it left Moscow and St. Petersburg for more Western capitals, bringing the latest word in orchestration and vocal ensemble, had only a hundred or so birthdays to its credit. Italian opera in the same season could, counting its earliest cradling days,

have shown the venerable age of nearly three hundred and eighty years.

But if Russia came late into the opera-building world, to step into it was to find a wealth of musical traditions ready for her craftsmanship. North and south of her immeasurable territory there were songs, songsters, national instruments, and men and women whose instincts for the dance were as strong as those to draw their life breath. The south in particular was rich in those art contributions always possible with a temperamental race; in lands, too, where the feeling of oppression is strong, and the desire fierce to escape from the conqueror's rule.

During the lifetime of Russia's Empress Anne, who died in 1740, this vast store of artistic power was overlooked, Italian opera companies being encouraged by her to produce their own opera in St. Petersburg. Her successor, however, the Empress Elizabeth turned her attention to the national talent, and gave every encouragement to her countrymen to write opera on the lines of the Russian musical spirit. Catherine the Great carried on this much-needed work, which enabled the four principal composers of her day—namely, Volkoff, Fomine, Tiloff and Cavo—*to compose and produce operatic scores free of French and Italian*



influences. Year by year, under Imperial patronage, steps were now cut quickly, which led to that wonderful goal reached later by the inspired men of an incoming century.

Voices, at the expense of the court exchequer, were sought in all parts of the country, the Ukraine—that land of ancient song and minstrelsy—in particular. Choirs, too, were formed for producing choral music in all its beauty of perfect ensemble. This training, generation by generation, of voices apart from instrumental co-operation, was bound to set up the unique type of chorus which is so striking a feature in Russian opera, and which compelled our admiration when Covent Garden staged the masterpieces of Moussorgsky and his compeers.

This dual force of vocal material and Imperial patronage always to hand, steadily strengthened the position of Russian opera, a position greatly advanced by the composer, Glinka, on the production of his music drama, "A Life for the Czar." Glinka's name is an all-important one in musical history. He was an ardent student of the operatic forms adopted in countries foreign to his own, and a great traveller in the interest of his art. Though criticised by his countrymen as showing foreign elements in his scores, on the whole he is

admitted by them to be the real founder of national opera. Such elements were doubtless unavoidable when his choice fell upon French plots and libretti, for the law of association is strong in that world of fancy which creative genius makes its own.

Following on the fame of Glinka comes that of Dargomijsky, whose opera, "The Stone Guest," marked another onward stage in Russian music drama. With the works of these earlier masters, an English audience is not yet acquainted; but they may yet be presented to us, for signs are not wanting that it is considered an interesting side to our musical life to follow the growth of a tonal structure, to note its stages of development at corresponding periods in all those countries working in its cause.

For the next important name connected with our subject, we must look to that of Balakirev, the bearer of which in the 'sixties drew about him a circle of amateur musicians more or less skilled in their art, for the purpose of carrying Russian music to yet further developments.

The history of these ardent spirits is an amazing one, for it shows us men whose energies and talents were already employed in spheres widely removed from those of artistic endeavour; whose

active consciousness was daily occupied with schemes for advancing the more material aims of life. To this circle, of which Balakirev was the director, belonged Borodin, Cui, Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov—a wonderful quintet, whose brains could turn from the modelling of arsenals and forts, from the mysteries of the laboratory and surgery, to fashion a structure of the highest artistic appeal.

A giant task was before this coterie of zealous workers, each one of whom was determined on producing opera in which there should be no slavish following of foreign methods, no striving after Wagnerian ideals. Music drama essentially Russian was the goal, and to that goal was brought an industry unparalleled, perhaps, in the history of art. A nicety of balance was to be secured between ballet, scenery, solo, choral and orchestral effects, all of which features were to be arranged on an efficiency befitting the dignity of the plot. The plot itself was never to be trivial, nor subjected to alterations to provide a musical climax, or anything suggestive of star requirements. Above all, every bar of the music was to be perfectly rendered, each singer an artist who would bear singling out from even the simplest chorus as the well-trained musician and vocalist.

With such stirring situations afforded at many of its periods, it is not surprising that the Slavonic composers turned to Russian history for their plots. Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov both knew the value of music drama culled from such a source, and in such masterpieces as "Boris Godounov" and "Ivan the Terrible," they brought to the operatic stage works of high dramatic appeal. In both, the excitable love interest associated with opera is absent. That all is intense and enthralling without this passionate element is proof sufficient that opera in Russian hands can be a marvellous creation; can enrich our musical life with emotional interest of a new and unexpected kind.

But Russian opera plots are not limited to historical incidents. Subject is found in village life and folk legend, in eastern romance, too, with all its highly-coloured sentiment. A good deal of humour comes into the two former at points, humour into which the music itself enters with amazing poignancy, and which is of that delightfully subtle kind that finds us laughing unawares. The "Coq d'Or," in particular, leaves us with droll pictures to recall when oppressed by the murky atmosphere of home and office worries.

In Tchaikovsky's operas a very varied choice of

plots comes under our notice. In one opera, "Vakonla the Smith," his creative skill is found employed in the service of magic and witchcraft, while in another "Oprichnik," a lurid historical incident has fired his genius. In "Eugene Onegin" and "The Queen of Spades" the composer found his muse in passionate love drama. In both these works—the former of which has been produced in England—Tchaïkovsky, in the opinion of his critics, proved his power to write in the fervid strain required by his plots. In "Joan of Arc" the musical setting taxed the composer's ability once more to provide something of a martial atmosphere. Many of its strains find their way into our programmes as concert items, as do those of "Mazeppa," the plot of which failed in its earlier scenes to satisfy Tchaïkovsky. In its later action, however, he, in his own estimation, rose to the demands of the legend, an opinion not altogether admitted by the musicians of his day.

It can be recalled by not a few perhaps, that Russian music when first it travelled to our shores, was received with rather extravagant criticism. Nihilism was read into every stirring theme, and sighs from Siberia in every tender strain. To-day, these views even amongst the most conservative, are modified. Music from Russia bears its

national stamp, and that with dignity and artistic restraint in all the greater works. It is highly poetic, glad as well as sad, showing on its opera side a perfect union between vocalisation and dramatic action. It can express a sense of triumph and defiance, too, a little over-vehemently perhaps in scores penned by minor composers of the more pretentious schools.











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